CALIFORNIA THEOLOGICAL BAPTIST SEMINARY
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SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, M. A.
LATE FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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SERMON LIII.

The Cure of Evil-Speaking.

Matthew xviii. 15, 16, 17.

If thy brother ſhall ſin againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: If he will hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother.

But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witneſſes, every word may be eſtabliſhed.

And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church: But if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man, and a publican.

1. "SPEAK evil of no man," ſays the great Apoſtle: as plain a command as "Thou ſhalt do no murder." But who, even among chriſtians, regards this command? Yea, how few are there, that ſo much as underſtand it? What is *Evil-ſpeaking?* It is not (as ſome ſuppoſe) the

ſame with lying or ſlandering. All a man ſays may be as true as the Bible; and yet the ſaying of it may be evil-ſpeaking. For evil-ſpeaking is neither more nor leſs, than ſpeaking evil of an abſent perſon, relating ſomething evil which was really done or ſaid, by one that is not preſent, when it is related. Suppoſe, having ſeen a man drunk, or heard him curſe or ſwear, I tell this when he is abſent; it is evil-ſpeaking. In our language, this is alſo by an extremely proper name termed *backbiting*. Nor is there any material difference between this and what we uſually ſtyle *tale-bearing*. If the tale be delivered in a ſoft and quiet manner, (perhaps with expreſſions of good-will to the perſon, and of hope, that things may not be quite ſo bad) then we call it *whiſpering*. But in whatever manner it be done, the thing is the ſame; the ſame in ſubſtance if not in circumſtance. Still it is evil-ſpeaking; ſtill this command, *Speak evil of no man*, is trampled under foot, if we relate to another the fault of a third perſon, when he is not preſent to anſwer for himſelf.

2. And how extremely common is this ſin, among all orders and degrees of men! How do high and low, rich and poor, wiſe and fooliſh, learned and unlearned, run into it continually? Perſons, who differ from each other in all things elſe, nevertheleſs agree in this. How few are there, that can teſtify before God. "I am clear in this matter: I have always ſet a watch before my mouth, and kept the door of my lips?" What converſation do you hear of any conſiderable length, whereof evil-ſpeaking is not one ingredient? And that even among perſons, who, in the general, have the fear of God before their

their eyes, and do really desire to have a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward man.

3. And the very commonness of this sin makes it difficult to be avoided. As we are encompassed with it on every side, so, if we are not deeply sensible of the danger, and continually guarding against it, we are liable to be carried away by the torrent. In this instance, almost the whole of mankind is, as it were, in a conspiracy against us. And their example steals upon us, we know not how; so that we insensibly slide into the imitation of it. Besides, it is recommended from within, as well as from without. There is scarce any wrong temper in the mind of man, which may not be occasionally gratified by it, and consequently incline us to it. It gratifies our pride, to relate those faults of others, whereof we think ourselves not to be guilty. Anger, resentment, and all unkind tempers are indulged, by speaking against those, with whom we are displeased. And in many cases, by reciting the sins of their neighbours, men indulge their own foolish and hurtful desires.

4. Evil-speaking is the more difficult to be avoided, because it frequently attacks us in disguise. We speak thus, out of a noble, generous, (it is well, if we do not say,) holy indignation against these vile creatures! We commit sin, from mere hatred of sin! We serve the devil, out of pure zeal for God! It is merely in order to punish the wicked, that we run into this wickedness. "So do the passions (as one speaks) all justify themselves," and palm sin upon us, under the veil of holiness.

5. But is there no way to avoid the ſnare? Unqueſtionably there is. Our bleſſed Lord has marked out a plain way for his followers, in the words above recited. None, who warily and ſteadily walk in this path, will ever fall into evil-ſpeaking. This rule is either an infallible preventitive, or a certain cure of it. In the preceding verſes, our Lord had ſaid, "Woe to the world becauſe of offences." Unſpeakable miſery will ariſe in the world, from this baleful fountain. (*Offences* are, all things, whereby any one is turned out of, or hindered in, the ways of God.) "For it muſt be that offences come." Such is the nature of things: Such the weakneſs, folly, and wickedneſs of mankind. "But wo to that man," miſerable is that man, "by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand, thy foot, thine eye, cauſe thee to offend:" If the moſt dear enjoyment, the moſt beloved and uſeful perſon, turn thee out of, or hinder thee in the way, "pluck it out, cut them off, and caſt them from thee." But how can we avoid giving offence to ſome, and being offended at others? Eſpecially, ſuppoſe they are quite in the wrong, and we ſee it with our own eyes? Our Lord here teaches us how: He lays down a ſure method of avoiding offences, and evil-ſpeaking together. "If thy brother ſhall ſin againſt thee, go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church; but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

I. 1. Firſt,

I. 1. Firſt, *If thy brother ſhall ſin againſt thee, go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone.* The moſt literal way of following this firſt rule, where it is practicable, is the beſt. Therefore, if thou ſeeſt with thine own eyes a brother, a fellow-chriſtian, commit undeniable ſin, or heareſt it with thine own ears, ſo that it is impoſſible for thee to doubt the fact, then thy part is plain: Take the very firſt opportunity of going to him: and if thou canſt have acceſs, *tell him of his fault between thee and him alone.* Indeed great care is to be taken that this is done in a right ſpirit, and in a right manner.—The ſucceſs of a reproof greatly depends on the ſpirit wherein it is given. Be not therefore wanting in earneſt prayer to God, that it may be given in a lowly ſpirit: with a deep, piercing conviction, that it is God alone who maketh thee to differ, and that if any good be done by what is now ſpoken, God doth it himſelf. Pray that he would guard thy heart, enlighten thy mind, and direct thy tongue to ſuch words as he may pleaſe to bleſs. See that thou ſpeak in a meek as well as a lowly ſpirit: for the "wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God." If he be "overtaken in a fault," he can no otherwiſe be reſtored than "in the ſpirit of meekneſs." If he oppoſes the truth, yet he cannot be brought to the knowledge thereof, but by gentleneſs. Still ſpeak in a ſpirit of tender love, "which many waters cannot quench." If love is not conquered, it conquers all things? Who can tell the force of love?

Love can bow down the ſtubborn neck,
The ſtone to fleſh convert;

Soften, and melt, and pierce, and break
An adamantine heart.

Confirm then your love toward him, and you will thereby "heap coals of fire upon his head."

2. But see that the manner also wherein you speak, be according to the gospel of Christ. Avoid every thing in look, gesture, word and tone of voice, that favours of pride or self-sufficiency. Studiously avoid every thing magisterial or dogmatical, every thing that looks like arrogance or assuming. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt. With equal care avoid all appearance of anger, and though you use great plainness of speech, yet let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of any warmth, but that of love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill-will, no bitterness or sourness of expression; but use the air and language of sweetness as well as gentleness, that all may appear to flow from love in the heart. And yet this sweetness need not hinder your speaking in the most serious and solemn manner: as far as may be, in the very words of the oracles of God, (for there are none like them) and as under the eye of him who is coming to judge the quick and dead.

3. If you have not an opportunity of speaking to him in person, or cannot have access, you may do it by a messenger; by a common friend in whose prudence, as well as uprightness, you can throughly confide. Such a person, speaking in your name, and in the spirit and manner above described, may answer the same end, and in a good degree supply your lack of service. Only beware you do not feign the want of opportunity,

in

in order to ſhun the croſs: neither take it for granted, that you cannot have acceſs, without ever making the trial. Whenever you can ſpeak in your own perſon, it is far better. But you ſhould rather do it by another, than not at all: This way is better than none.

4. But what if you can neither ſpeak yourſelf, nor find ſuch a meſſenger as you can confide in. If this be really the caſe, it then only remains, to write. And there may be ſome circumſtances which make this the moſt adviſable way of ſpeaking. One of theſe circumſtances is, when the perſon with whom we have to do, is of ſo warm and impetuous a temper, as does not eaſy bear reproof, eſpecially from an equal or inferior. But it may be ſo introduced and ſoftened in writing as to make it far more tolerable. Beſides, many will read the very ſame words, which they could not bear to hear. It does not give ſo violent a ſhock to their pride, nor ſo ſenſibly touch their honour. And ſuppoſe it makes little impreſſion at firſt, they will perhaps give it a ſecond reading, and upon farther conſideration lay to heart, what before they diſregarded. If you add your name, this is nearly the ſame thing, as going to him, and ſpeaking in perſon. And this ſhould always be done, unleſs it be rendered improper by ſome very particular reaſon.

5. It ſhould be well obſerved, not only that this is a ſtep which our Lord abſolutely commands us to take, but that he commands us to take this ſtep firſt, before we attempt any other. No alternative is allowed, no choice of any thing elſe: This is the way; walk thou in it. It is true, he enjoins us, if need require, to take two other ſteps. But they are to be taken ſucceſſively after this ſtep, and

and neither of them before it. Much leſs are we to take any other ſtep, either before, or beſide this. To do any thing elſe, or not to do this, is therefore equally inexcuſable.

6. Do not think to excuſe yourſelf for taking an entirely different ſtep, by ſaying, "Why, I did not ſpeak to any one, till I was ſo burdened, that I could not refrain," You was burdened! It was no wonder you ſhould; unleſs your conſcience was ſeared. For you was under the guilt of ſin, of diſobeying a plain commandment of God. You ought immediately to have gone and *told your brother of his fault between you and him alone.* If you did not, how ſhould you be other, than burdened, (unleſs your heart was utterly hardened,) while you was trampling the command of God under foot, and "hating your brother in your heart?" And what a way have you found to unburden yourſelf? God reproves you for a ſin of omiſſion, for not telling your brother of his fault: and you comfort yourſelf under his reproof, by a ſin of commiſſion, by telling your brother's fault to another perſon! Eaſe bought by ſin is a dear purchaſe: I truſt in God you will have no eaſe, but will be burdened ſo much the more, till you *go to your brother, and tell him*, and no one elſe.

7. I know but of one exception to this rule. There may be a peculiar caſe, wherein it is neceſſary to accuſe the guilty though abſent, in order to preſerve the innocent. For inſtance: You are acquainted with the deſign which a man has againſt the property or life of his neighbour. Now the caſe may be ſo circumſtanced, that there is no other way of hindering that deſign from taking effect, but the making it known without delay,

delay, to him againſt whom it is laid. In this caſe, therefore, this rule is ſet aſide, as is that of the Apoſtle; "ſpeak evil of no man:" and it is lawful, yea, it is our bounden duty, to ſpeak evil of an abſent perſon, in order to prevent his doing evil, to others and himſelf at the ſame time. But remember, meanwhile, that all evil-ſpeaking is, in its own nature, deadly poiſon. Therefore if you are ſometimes conſtrained to uſe it as a medicine, yet uſe it with fear and trembling; ſeeing it ſo dangerous a medicine, that nothing but abſolute neceſſity can excuſe your uſing it at all. Accordingly uſe it as ſeldom as poſſible; never but when there is ſuch a neceſſity: and even then uſe as little of it as is poſſible; only ſo much as is neceſſary for the end propoſed. At all other times, *go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone.*

II. 1. But what *if he will not hear?* If he repay evil for good? If he be enraged rather than convinced? What if he hear to no purpoſe, and go on ſtill in the evil of his way? We muſt expect this will frequently be the caſe; the mildeſt and tendereſt reproof, will have no effect, but the bleſſing we wiſhed for another, will return into our own boſom. And what are we to do then? Our Lord has given us a clear and full direction. Then *take with thee one or two more:* This is the ſecond ſtep. Take one or two whom you know to be of a loving ſpirit, lovers of God and of their neighbour. See likewiſe that they be of a lowly ſpirit, and "clothed with humility." Let them alſo be ſuch as are meek and gentle, patient and long-ſuffering; not apt to "return evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwiſe

wiſe bleſſing." Let them be men of underſtanding, ſuch as are endued with wiſdom from above; and men unbiaſſed, free from partiality, free from prejudice of any kind. Care ſhould likewiſe be taken, that both the perſons and their characters be well known to him. And let thoſe that are acceptable to him be choſen, preferable to any others.

2. Love will dictate the manner wherein they ſhould proceed, according to the nature of the caſe. Nor can any one particular manner be preſcribed for all caſes. But perhaps in general one might adviſe, before they enter upon the thing itſelf, let them mildly and affectionately declare that they have no anger or prejudice toward him, and that it is merely from a principle of goodwill, that they now come, or at all concern themſelves with his affairs. To make this the more apparent, they might then calmly attend to your repetition of your former converſation with him, and to what he then ſaid in his own defence, before they attempted to determine any thing. After this they would be better able to judge, in what manner to proceed, *that by the mouth of two or three witneſſes, every word might be eſtabliſhed:* That whatever you have ſaid, may have its full force, by the additional weight of their authority.

3. In order to this, may they not, 1. Briefly repeat what you ſpoke, and what he anſwered? 2. Inlarge upon, open and confirm the reaſons which you had given? 3. Give weight to your reproof, ſhewing how juſt, how kind, and how ſeaſonable it was: And laſtly, Inforce the advices and perſuaſions which you had annext to it? And

And these may likewise hereafter, if need should require, bear witness of what was spoken.

4. With regard to this, as well as the preceding rule, we may observe, that our Lord gives us no choice, leaves us no alternative, but expressly commands us to do this, and nothing else in the place of it. He likewise directs us, when to do this. Neither sooner nor later. Namely, *after* we have taken the first, and *before* we have taken the third step. It is then only, that we are authorized to relate the evil another has done, to those whom we desire to bear a part with us, in this great instance of brotherly love. But let us have a care, how we relate it to any other person, till both these steps have been taken. If we neglect to take these, or if we take any others, what wonder if we are burdened still? For we are sinners against God, and against our neighbour. And how fairly soever we may colour it, yet, if we have any conscience, our sin will find us out, and bring a burden upon our soul.

III. 1. That we may be throughly instructed in this weighty affair, our Lord has given us a still farther direction. *If he will not hear them*, then, and not till then, *tell it to the Church*. This is the third step. All the question is, How this word, the *Church*, is here to be understood? But the very nature of the thing will determine this, beyond all reasonable doubt. You cannot tell it to the national Church, the whole body of men termed, the *Church of England*. Neither would it answer any christian end, if you could: this, therefore is not the meaning of the word. Neither

ther can you tell it to that whole body of people in England, with whom you have a more immediate connexion. Nor indeed would this anſwer any good end: The word, therefore, is not to be underſtood thus. It would not anſwer any valuable end, to tell the faults of every particular member to the Church, (if you would ſo term it) the congregation or ſociety united together in London. It remains that you tell it to the elder, or elders of the Church, to thoſe who are overſeers of that flock of Chriſt, to which you both belong, who watch over yours and his ſoul, "as they that muſt give account." And this ſhould be done, if it conveniently can, in the preſence of the perſon concerned, and though plainly, yet with all the tenderneſs and love, which the nature of the thing will admit. It properly belongs to their office, to determine concerning the behaviour of thoſe under their care, and to rebuke according to the demerit of the offence, *with all authority*. When therefore you have done this, you have done all which the word of God, or the law of love requireth of you. You are not now partaker of his ſin, but if he periſh, his blood is on his own head

2. Here alſo let it be obſerved, that this, and no other, is the third ſtep which we are to take: And that we are to take it in its order, after the other two; not before the ſecond, much leſs the firſt; unleſs in ſome very particular circumſtance. Indeed in one caſe, the ſecond ſtep may coincide with this: they may be in a manner one and the ſame. The elder or elders of the Church may be ſo connected with the offended brother, that they may ſet aſide the neceſſity, and ſupply the place

place of the one or two witneſſes. So that it may ſuffice to tell it to them, after you have told it to your brother, *between you and him alone.*

3. When you have done this, you have delivered your own ſoul. *If he will not hear the Church*, if he perſiſt in his ſin, *let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.* You are under no obligation to think of him any more: Only when you commend him to God in prayer. You need not ſpeak of him any more, but leave him, to his own maſter. Indeed you ſtill owe to him, as to all other heathens, earneſt, tender good-will. You owe him courteſy, and as occaſion offers, all the offices of humanity. But have no friendſhip, no familiarity with him; no other intercourſe than with an open heathen.

4. But if this be the rule by which Chriſtians walk, Which is the land where the Chriſtians live? A few you may poſſibly find ſcattered up and down, who make a conſcience of obſerving it. But how very few? How thinly ſcattered upon the face of the earth? And where is there any body of men, that univerſally walk thereby? Can we find them in Europe? Or, to go no farther, in Great Britain or Ireland? I fear not: I fear we may ſearch theſe kingdoms throughout, and yet ſearch in vain. Alas, for the Chriſtian world? Alas, for Proteſtants, for reformed Chriſtians! "O who will riſe up with me againſt the wicked? Who will take God's part" againſt the evil-ſpeakers? Art *thou the man?* By the grace of God wilt thou be one, who art not carried away by the torrent? Art thou fully determined, God being thy helper,

from this very hour, to set a watch, a continual "watch before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips?" From this hour wilt thou walk by this rule "speaking evil of no man?" If thou seest thy brother do evil, wilt thou *tell him of his fault between thee and him alone?* Afterwards *take one or two* witnesses, and then only *tell it to the Church?* If this be the full purpose of thy heart, then learn one lesson well, *Hear evil of no man;* If there were no hearers, there would be no speakers of evil. And is not (according to the vulgar proverb) the receiver as bad as the thief? If then any begin to speak evil in thy hearing, check him immediately. Refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so sweetly: let him use ever so soft a manner, so mild an accent, every so many professions of good will, for him whom he is stabbing in the dark, whom he smiteth under the fifth rib. Resolutely refuse to hear, though the whisperer complain of being *burdened* till he speak. Burdened! Thou fool, dost thou *travail with* thy cursed *secret as a woman travaileth with child?* Go then and be delivered of thy burden, in the way the Lord hath ordained. First, *Go and tell thy brother of his fault between thee and him alone.* Next, *take with thee one or two* common friends, and tell him in their presence. If neither of these steps take effect, then *tell it to the Church.* But at the peril of thy soul, tell it to no one else, either before or after. Unless in that one exempt case, when it is absolutely needful, to preserve the innocent. Why shouldst thou burden another as well as thyself, by making him partaker of thy sin?

5. O that all you who bear the reproach of Christ, who are in derision called Methodists, would

would ſet an example to the Chriſtian world, ſo called, at leaſt in this one inſtance! Put ye away evil ſpeaking, tale-bearing, whiſpering: let none of them proceed out of your mouth. See that you "ſpeak evil of no man;" of the abſent nothing but good. If you muſt be diſtinguiſhed, whether ye will or no, let this be the diſtinguiſhing mark of a Methodiſt, "He cenſures no man behind his back: by this fruit ye may know him." What a bleſſed effect of this ſelf-denial ſhould we quickly feel in our hearts? How would our *peace flow as a river*, when we thus *follow peace with all men?* How would the love of God abound in our own ſouls, while we thus confirm our love to our brethren? And what an effect would it have on all that were united together in the name of the Lord Jeſus? How would brotherly love continually increaſe, when this grand hinderance of it was removed? All the members of Chriſt's myſtical body would then naturally care for each other? "If one member ſuffered, all would ſuffer with it;" if one was honoured, all would rejoice with it;" and every one would love his brother "with a pure heart fervently." Nor is this all: But what an effect might this have, even on the wild unthinking world? How ſoon would they deſcry in us, what they could not find among all the thouſands of their brethren, and cry, (as *Julian*, the apoſtate, to his heathen courtiers,) "See how theſe Chriſtians love one another!" By this chiefly would God convince the world, and prepare them alſo for his kingdom: as we may eaſily learn from thoſe remarkable words in our Lord's laſt, ſo-

lemn prayer. "I pray for them who will believe in me, that they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,—that the world may believe, that thou haſt ſent me!" The Lord haſten the time! The Lord enable us thus to love one another, not only "in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth," even as Chriſt hath loved us.

SERMON

SERMON LIV.

ON THE USE OF MONEY.

LUKE xvi. 9.

I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

1. OUR Lord having finished the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, which he had particularly addressed to those, who murmured at his receiving publicans and sinners, adds another relation of a different kind, addressed rather to the children of God. "He said unto his disciples," (ver. 1.) not so much to the scribes and pharisees, to whom he had been speaking before—"There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and he was accused to him of wasting his goods. And calling him, he said, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward," (ver. 2.)

After reciting the method, which the bad ſteward uſed, to provide againſt the day of neceſſity, our Saviour adds, "His Lord commended the unjuſt ſteward," namely, in this reſpect, That he uſed timely precaution, and ſubjoins this weighty reflection, "the children of this world are wiſer in their generation, than the children of light," (ver. 8.) Thoſe, who ſeek no other portion than this world, are wiſer, (not abſolutely;) for they are, one and all, the veryeſt fools, the moſt egregious madmen under heaven, but *in their generation*, in their own way; they are more conſiſtent with themſelves, they are truer to their acknowledged principles, they more ſteadily purſue their end, *than the children of light*, than they who ſee *the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*. Then follow the words above recited. *And I*—the only begotten Son of God, the Creator, Lord and Poſſeſſor of heaven and earth, and all that is therein; the Judge of all, to whom ye are to *give an account of* your *ſtewardſhip*, when ye *can be no longer ſtewards; I ſay unto you*, learn in this reſpect, even of the unjuſt ſteward, *make yourſelves friends*, by wiſe, timely precaution, *of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*. *Mammon* means riches or money. It is termed *the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*, becauſe of the unrighteous manner, wherein it is frequently procured, and wherein even that, which was honeſtly procured, is generally employed. *Make yourſelf friends* of this by doing all poſſible good, particularly to the children of God, *that when ye fail*, when ye return to duſt, when ye have no more place under the ſun, thoſe of them, who are gone before, *may receive you*, may welcome you *into everlaſting habitations*.

2. An

2. An excellent branch of chriſtian wiſdom is here inculcated by our Lord on all his followers, namely, The right uſe of money; a ſubject largely ſpoken of after their manner, by men of the world; but not ſufficiently conſidered by thoſe whom God hath choſen out of the world. Theſe generally do not conſider, as the importance of the ſubject requires, the uſe of this excellent talent. Neither do they underſtand how to employ it to the greateſt advantage; the introduction of which into the world, is one admirable inſtance of the wiſe and gracious Providence of God. It has indeed been the manner of Poets, Orators, and Philoſophers, in almoſt all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the peſt of human ſociety.—Hence nothing ſo commonly heard, as,

Ferrum, ferroque nocentius aurum:

"And gold, more miſchievous than keeneſt ſteel."

Hence the lamentable complaint,

Effodiunter opes, irritamenta malorum.

Nay, one celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen, in order to baniſh all vice at once, to "throw all their money into the ſea."

In mare proximum,
Summi materiem mali!

But is not all this mere, empty rant? Is there any ſolid reaſon therein? By no means For let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or ſilver to blame? *The love of money*, we know, *is the root of all evil:* but not the thing itſelf. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that uſe

uſe it. It may be uſed ill: and what may not? But it may likewiſe be uſed well: it is full as applicable to the beſt, as to the worſt uſes. It is of unſpeakable ſervice to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life. It is a moſt compendious inſtrument, of tranſacting all manner of buſineſs, and (if we uſe it according to chriſtian wiſdom) of doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a ſtate of innocence, or were all men *filled with the Holy Ghoſt*, ſo that, like the infant Church at Jeruſalem, *no man counted any thing he had his own*, but *diſtribution was made to every one as he had need*; the uſe of it would be ſuperſeded; as we cannot conceive there is any thing of the kind, among the inhabitants of heaven. But in the preſent ſtate of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, anſwering the nobleſt ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirſty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveller and the ſtranger where to lay his head. By it we may ſupply the place of an huſband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherleſs. We may be a defence for the oppreſſed, a means of health to the ſick, of eaſe to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death.

3. It is, therefore, of the higheſt concern, that all, who fear God, know how to employ this valuable talent; that they be inſtructed, how it may anſwer theſe glorious ends, and in the higheſt degree. And perhaps all the inſtructions, which are neceſſary for this, may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact obſervance whereof we may approve ourſelves faithful ſtewards of *the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*.

I. 1. The

I. 1. The firſt of theſe is, (he that heareth, let him underſtand!) *Gain all you can.* Here we may ſpeak like the children of the world; we meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it, than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expence of life: nor (which is in effect the ſame thing) at the expence of our health. Therefore no gain whatſoever ſhould induce us to enter into, or continue in any employ, which is of ſuch a kind, or is attended with ſo hard or ſo long labour, as to impair our conſtitution. Neither ſhould we begin or continue in any buſineſs, which neceſſarily deprives us of proper ſeaſons for food and ſleep in ſuch a proportion as our nature requires. Indeed there is a great difference here: Some employments are abſolutely and totally unhealthy: as thoſe which imply the dealing much with arſenic, or other equally hurtful minerals; or the breathing an air tainted with ſteams of melting lead, which muſt at length deſtroy the firmeſt conſtitution. Others may not be abſolutely unhealthy, but only to perſons of a weak conſtitution. Such are thoſe which require many hours to be ſpent in writing; eſpecially if a perſon write ſitting, and lean upon his ſtomach, or remain long in an uneaſy poſture. But whatever it is which reaſon or experience ſhews to be deſtructive of health or ſtrength, that we may not ſubmit to; ſeeing *the life is more* valuable *than meat, and the body than raiment.* And if we are already engaged in ſuch an employ, we ſhould exchange it as ſoon as poſſible, for ſome,

ſome, which if it leſſen our gain, will however not leſſen our health.

2. We are ſecondly, to *gain all we can*, without hurting our mind any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this: we muſt preſerve, at all events, the ſpirit of an healthful mind. Therefore we may not engage or continue in any ſinful trade, any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country. Such are all that neceſſarily imply our robbing or defrauding the king of his lawful cuſtoms. For it is at leaſt as ſinful, to defraud the king of his right, as to rob our fellow-ſubjects. And the king has full as much right to his cuſtoms as we have to our houſes and apparel. Other buſineſſes there are, which however innocent *in themſelves*, cannot be followed with innocence now: at leaſt, not in England: ſuch, for inſtance, as will not afford a competent maintenance, without cheating or lying, or conformity to ſome cuſtom, which is not conſiſtent with a good conſcience. Theſe likewiſe are ſacredly to be avoided, whatever gain they may be attended with, provided we follow the cuſtom of the trade. For, to gain money we muſt not loſe our ſouls. There are yet others which many purſue with perfect innocence, without hurting either their body or mind. And yet perhaps you cannot: either they may entangle you in that company, which would deſtroy your ſoul: and by repeated experiments it may appear, that you cannot ſeparate the one from the other: or there may be an idioſyncraſy, a peculiarity, in your conſtitution of ſoul (as there is in the bodily conſtitution of many,) by reaſon whereof that employment is deadly to you, which another may ſafely follow. So I am convinced from many experiments,

periments, I could not ſtudy to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic, or algebra, without being a deiſt, if not an atheiſt. And yet, others may ſtudy them all their lives, without ſuſtaining any inconvenience. None therefore can here determine for another, but every man muſt judge for himſelf, and abſtain from whatever he in particular finds to be hurtful to his ſoul.

3. We are, thirdly, to *gain all we can*, without hurting our neighbour. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbour as ourſelves. We cannot, if we love every one as ourſelves, hurt any one *in his ſubſtance*. We cannot devour the increaſe of his lands, and perhaps the lands and houſes themſelves, by gaming, by over-grown bills (whether on account of phyſic, of law, or any thing elſe,) or by requiring or taking ſuch intereſt, as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawn-broking is excluded: ſeeing whatever good we might do thereby, all unprejudiced men ſee with grief to be abundantly over-balanced by the evil. And if it were otherwiſe, yet we are not allowed, to *do evil that good may come*. We cannot, conſiſtent with brotherly love, ſell our goods below the market-price. We cannot ſtudy to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own. Much leſs can we entice away, or receive any of his ſervants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain, by ſwallowing up his neighbour's ſubſtance, without gaining the damnation of hell.

4. Neither may we gain, by hurting our neighbour *in his body*. Therefore we may not ſell any thing which tends to impair health.

Such

Such is eminently all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or ſpirituous liquors. It is true, theſe may have a place in medicine; they may be of uſe, in ſome bodily diſorders: (although there would rarely be occaſion for them, were it not for the unſkilfulneſs of the practitioner.) Therefore ſuch as prepare and ſell them *only for this end*, may keep their conſcience clear. But who are they? Who prepare and ſell them *only for this end?* Do you know ten ſuch diſtillers in England? Then excuſe theſe. But all who ſell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poiſoners-general. They murder his Majeſty's ſubjects by wholeſale, neither do their eye pity or ſpare. They drive them to hell, like ſheep: And what is their gain? Is it not the blood of theſe men? Who then would envy their large eſtates and ſumptuous palaces? A curſe is in the midſt of them: the curſe of God cleaves to the ſtones, the timber, the furniture of them. The curſe of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire that burns to the nethermoſt hell. Blood, blood is there: the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof are ſtained with blood! And canſt thou hope, O thou man of blood, though thou art "clothed in ſcarlet and fine linen, and fareſt ſumptuouſly every day;" canſt thou hope to deliver down the *fields of blood*, to the third generation? Not ſo; for there is a God in heaven, therefore thy name ſhall be rooted out. Like as thoſe whom thou haſt deſtroyed, body and ſoul, "thy memorial ſhall periſh with thee."

5. And are not they partakers of the ſame guilt, though in a lower degree, whether ſurgeons, apothecaries, or phyſicians, who play with the

the lives or health of men, to enlarge their own gain? Who purpoſely lengthen the pain or diſeaſe, which they are able to remove ſpeedily? Who protract the cure of their patient's body, in order to plunder his ſubſtance? Can any man be clear before God, who does not ſhorten every diſorder, *as much as he can*, and remove all ſickneſs and pain, *as ſoon as he can?* He cannot: for nothing can be more clear, than that he does not *do unto others, as he would they ſhould do unto* himſelf.

6. This is dear-bought gain. And ſo is whatever is procured, by hurting our neighbour *in his ſoul*, by miniſtering, ſuppoſe, either directly or indirectly to his unchaſtity or intemperance; which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real deſign of pleaſing him. It nearly concerns all thoſe to conſider this, who have any thing to do with taverns, victualling-houſes, opera-houſes, play-houſes, or any other places of public, faſhionable diverſion. If theſe profit the ſouls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent. But if they are either ſinful in themſelves, or natural inlets to ſin of various kinds, then it is to be feared, you have a ſad account to make. O beware, leſt God ſay in that day, "Theſe have periſhed in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands!"

7. Theſe cautions and reſtrictions being obſerved, it is the bounden duty of all, who are engaged in worldly buſineſs, to obſerve that firſt and great rule of chriſtian wiſdom, with reſpect to money. *Gain all you can.* Gain all you can by honeſt induſtry: Uſe all poſſible diligence

in your calling. Loſe no time: If you underſtand yourſelf, and your relation to God and man, you know you have none to ſpare. If you underſtand your particular calling, as you ought, you will have no time that hangs upon your hands. Every buſineſs will afford ſome employment ſufficient for every day, and every hour. That wherein you are placed, if you follow it in earneſt, will leave you no leiſure for ſilly, unprofitable diverſions. You have always ſomething better to do, ſomething that will profit you, more or leſs. And "whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Do it as ſoon as poſſible: No delay! No putting off from day to day, or from hour to hour. Never leave any thing till to-morrow, which you can do to-day. And do it as well as poſſible. Do not ſleep or yawn over it: Put your whole ſtrength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a ſlight and careleſs manner. Let nothing in your buſineſs be left undone, if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain *all you can*, by common ſenſe, by uſing in your buſineſs all the underſtanding, which God has given you. It is amazing to obſerve, how few do this: how men run on in the ſame dull track with their forefathers. But whatever they do, who know not God, this is no rule for you. It is a ſhame for a Chriſtian, not to improve upon *them*, in whatever he takes in hand. You ſhould be continually learning, from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading, and reflection, to do every thing you have to do, better to-day, than you did

did yesterday. And see that you practise whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the second rule of christian prudence is, *Save all you can*, Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expences, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly, in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: an honest heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable, kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly at least) impair the understanding. And yet (to mention no other effects of it now) it cannot be maintained without considerable expence. Cut off all this expence: Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by superfluous and expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses, in superfluous or expensive furniture: in costly pictures, painting, gild-

ing, books: In elegant (rather than useful) gardens. Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this: "Let the dead bury their dead." But "what is that to thee," says our Lord? "Follow thou me." Are you willing? Then you are able so to do.

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expence is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify their eye, their imagination, but their vanity too. "So long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." So long as thou art "clothed in purple and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day," no doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honour that cometh from God.

5. Who would expend any thing in gratifying these desires, if he considered, that to gratify them is to increase them. Nothing can be more certain than this: daily experience shews, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever therefore you expend any thing to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, for a stronger attachment to these pleasures which perish in the using. While you are purchasing any thing which men used to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you

you not then enough of vanity, ſenſuality, curioſity, before? Was there need of any addition? And would you pay for it too? What manner of wiſdom is this? Would not the literally throwing your money into the ſea, be a leſs miſchievous folly?

6. And why ſhould you throw away money upon your children, any more than upon yourſelf, in delicate food, in gay or coſtly apparel, in ſuperfluities of any kind? Why ſhould you purchaſe for them, more pride or luſt, more vanity, or fooliſh and hurtful deſires? They do not want any more: they have enough already: Nature has made ample proviſion for them. Why ſhould you be at farther expence, to increaſe their temptations and ſnares, and to pierce them through with many ſorrows?

7. Do not leave it to them, to throw away. If you have good reaſon to believe, they would waſte what is now in your poſſeſſion, in gratifying and thereby increaſing the deſire of the fleſh, the deſire of the eye, or the pride of life; at the peril of theirs and your own ſoul, do not ſet theſe traps in their way. Do not offer your ſons or your daughters unto Belial, any more than unto Moloch. Have pity upon them, and remove out of their way, what you may eaſily foreſee, would increaſe their ſins, and conſequently plunge them deeper into everlaſting perdition. How amazing then is the infatuation of thoſe parents, who think they can never leave their children enough. What cannot you leave them enough of arrows, firebrands and death? Not enough of fooliſh and hurtful deſires? Not enough of pride, luſt, ambition, vanity? Not

enough of everlasting burnings? Poor wretch! Thou fearest where no fear is. Surely both thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of "the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never shall be quenched!"

8. "What then would you do, if you was in my case? If you had a considerable fortune to leave?" Whether I would do it, or no, I know what I *ought* to do: This will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money, one who I believed would put it to the true use, I should think it my absolute, indispensable duty, to leave that child the bulk of my fortune; and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. "But what if all your children were equally ignorant of the true use of money?" I ought then (Hard Saying! Who can bear it?) to give each what would keep him above want: and to bestow all the rest in such a manner, as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine, that he has done any thing barely by going thus far, by *gaining and saving all he can*, if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a further end. Nor indeed can any man properly be said, to save any thing, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away.

away. If therefore you would indeed *make yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*, add the third rule to the two preceding. Having firſt gained all you can, and ſecondly ſaved all you can, then give all you can.

2. In order to ſee the ground and reaſon of this, conſider, When the Poſſeſſor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a ſteward As ſuch he intruſted you for a ſeaſon with goods of various kinds. But the ſole property of theſe ſtill reſts in him, nor can ever be alienated from him. As you yourſelf are not your own, but his, ſuch is likewiſe all that you enjoy, Such is your ſoul and your body, not your own, but God's. And ſo is your ſubſtance in particular. And he has told you in the moſt clear and expreſs terms, how you are to employ it for him, in ſuch a manner, that it may be all an holy ſacrifice, acceptable through Chriſt Jeſus. And this light eaſy ſervice, he hath promiſed to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The direction which God hath given us, touching the uſe of our worldly ſubſtance, may be compriſed in the following particulars. If you deſire to be a faithful and a wiſe ſteward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the preſent lodged in your hands, but with the right of reſuming, whenever it pleaſes him: Firſt, provide things needful for yourſelf, food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires, for preſerving the body in health and ſtrength: Secondly, provide theſe for your wife, your children, your ſervants, or any

any others, who pertain to your houſhold. If, when this is done, there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are of the houſhold of faith. If there be an overplus ſtill, "as you have an opportunity, do good unto all men." In ſo doing, you give all you can; nay, in a ſound ſenſe, all you have: for all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but alſo by that, which you expend in providing things needful for yourſelf and your houſhold.

4. If then a doubt ſhould at any time ariſe in your mind, concerning what you are going to expend, either on yourſelf or any part of your family, you have an eaſy way to remove it. Calmly and ſeriouſly enquire, 1. In expending this, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a ſteward of my Lord's goods? 2. Am I doing this in obedience to his word? In what ſcripture does he require me ſo to do? 3. Can I offer up this action, this expence, as a ſacrifice to God through Jeſus Chriſt? 4. Have I reaſon to believe, that for this very work I ſhall have a reward at the reſurrection of the juſt? You will ſeldom need any thing more to remove any doubt, which ariſes on this head; but by this fourfold conſideration, you will receive clear light as to the way wherein you ſhould go.

5. If any doubt ſtill remain, you may farther examine yourſelf by prayer, according to thoſe heads of enquiry. Try whether you can ſay to the Searcher of hearts, your conſcience not condemning you, "Lord, thou ſeeſt, I am going to

to expend this ſum, on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knoweſt, I act therein with a ſingle eye, as a ſteward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus, in purſuance of the deſign thou hadſt in intruſting me with them. Thou knoweſt I do this in obedience to thy word, as thou commandeſt, and becauſe thou commandeſt it. Let this, I beſeech thee, be an holy ſacrifice, acceptable through Jeſus Chriſt! And give me a witneſs in myſelf, that for this labour of love I ſhall have a recompence, when thou rewardeſt every man according to his works." Now if your conſcience bear you witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that this prayer is well-pleaſing to God, then you have no reaſon to doubt, but that expence is right and good, and ſuch as will never make you aſhamed.

6. You ſee then what it is, to *make yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*, and by what means you may procure, *that when ye fail they may receive you into everlaſting habitations.* You ſee the nature and extent of true chriſtian prudence, ſo far as it relates to the uſe of that great talent, Money. Gain all you can, without hurting either yourſelf or your neighbour, in ſoul or body; by applying hereto with uninterrupted diligence, and with all the underſtanding which God has given you. Save all you can, by cutting off every expence, which ſerves only to indulge fooliſh deſire: to gratify either the deſire of the fleſh, the deſire of the eye, or the pride of life. Waſte nothing, living or dying, on ſin or folly, whether for yourſelf or your children. And then give all you can, or in other words, give all you have to God. Do not ſtint yourſelf,

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yourſelf, like a Jew rather than a Chriſtian, to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not an half; but all that is God's, be it more or leſs: By employing all, on yourſelf, your houſhold, the houſhold of faith, and all mankind, in ſuch a manner, that you may give a good account of your ſtewardſhip, when ye can be no longer ſtewards: In ſuch a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts: In ſuch a manner, that whatever ye do may be *a ſacrifice of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour to God*; and that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all his ſaints.

7. Brethren, can we be either wiſe or faithful ſtewards, unleſs we thus manage our Lord's goods? We cannot, as not only the Oracles of God, but our own conſcience beareth witneſs. Then why ſhould we delay? Why ſhould we confer any longer with fleſh and blood, or men of the world? Our kingdom, our wiſdom is not of this world: Heathen cuſtom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther than they are followers of Chriſt. Hear ye him: yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice. At this hour, and from this hour, do his will: Fulfil his word, in this and in all things. I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, act up to the dignity of your calling. No more ſloth! Whatſoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. No more waſte! Cut off every expence which faſhion, caprice, or fleſh and blood demand. No more covetouſneſs! But employ whatever God has entruſted you with, in doing good, all poſſible good, and in every poſſible

ble kind and degree, to the houſhold of faith, to all men. This is no ſmall part of *the wiſdom of the juſt:* Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a ſpiritual ſacrifice to him, who with-held not from you his Son, his only Son: So *laying up in ſtore for yourſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life.*

SERMON

SERMON LV.

ON ETERNITY.

PSALM XC. 2.

From Everlasting to Everlasting thou art GOD.

1. I WOULD fain speak of that awful subject Eternity. But how can we grasp it in our thought? It is so vast, that the narrow mind of man, is utterly unable to comprehend it. But does it not bear some affinity to another incomprehensible thing, Immensity? May not Space, though an unsubstantial thing, be compared with another unsubstantial thing, Duration? But what is Immensity? It is boundless Space. And what is Eternity? It is boundless Duration.

2. Eternity has generally been considered, as divisible into two parts: which have been termed, Eternity *a parte ante*, and Eternity *a parte post*: that is, in plain English, that eternity which is past, and that Eternity which is to come. And

does there not seem to be an intimation of this distinction in the text? *Thou art God from everlasting.* Here is an expression of that Eternity which is past—*to everlasting.* Here is an expression of that Eternity which is to come. Perhaps, indeed, some may think it is not strictly proper to say, There is an eternity that is past. But the meaning is easily understood: we mean thereby, Duration which had no beginning; as by Eternity to come, we mean that Duration which will have no end.

3. It is God alone who (to use the exalted language of Scripture) *inhabiteth Eternity* in both these senses. The great Creator alone, (not any of his creatures) is *from everlasting to everlasting:* it is Duration alone, as it had no beginning, so it cannot have any end. On this consideration it is, that one speaks thus, in addressing *Immanuel,* God with us,

"Hail, God the Son, with glory crown'd,
E'er time began to be;
Thron'd with thy Sire through half the round
Of wide Eternity!"

And again,

"Hail, God the Son, with glory crown'd,
When time shall cease to be:
Thron'd with the Father through the round
Of whole Eternity!"

4. "E'er time began to be."—But what is *Time?* It is not easy to say, as frequently as we have had the word in our mouth. We know not what it properly is; we cannot well tell how to

define it. But is it not in some sense a fragment of Eternity, broken off at both ends? That portion of duration which commenced when the world began, which will continue as long as this world endures, and then expire for ever? That portion of it which is at present measured by the revolution of the sun and planets, lying (so to speak) between two Eternities, that which is past, and that which is to come. But as soon as the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of Him that sitteth on the great white throne, time will be no more, but sink into the ocean of Eternity.

5. But by what means can a mortal man, the creature of a day, form any idea of Eternity? What can we find within the compass of nature, to illustrate it by? With what comparison shall we compare it? What is there that bears any resemblance to it? Does there not seem to be some sort of analogy between boundless Duration and boundless Space? The great Creator, the Infinite Spirit, inhabits both the one and the other. This is one of his peculiar prerogatives: *Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* Yea, not only the utmost regions of Creation, but all the expanse of boundless Space! Mean time how many of the children of men may say,

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Midst two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell?"

6. But leaving one of these unbounded seas to the Father of Eternity, to whom alone Duration without beginning belongs, let us turn our thoughts on Duration without end. This is not an incommunicable attribute of the great Creator; but he has been graciously pleased to make innumerable multitudes of his creatures partakers of it. He has imparted this not only to his angels, and archangels, and all the companies of heaven, who are not intended to die, but to glorify him and live in his presence for ever: but also to the inhabitants of the earth, who dwell in houses of clay. Their bodies indeed are *crushed before the moth*, but their souls will never die. God made them, as an ancient writer speaks, to be *pictures of his own eternity*. Indeed all Spirits, we have reason to believe, are clothed with immortality: having no inward principle of corruption, and being liable to no external violence.

7. Perhaps we may go a step farther still. Is not Matter itself, as well as Spirit, in one sense eternal? Not indeed *a parte ante*, as some senseless Philosophers, both antient and modern, have dreamed. Not that any thing had existed from Eternity; seeing, if so, it must be God. Yea, it must be the one God; for it is impossible there should be two Gods, or two Eternals. But although nothing beside the great God, can have existed from everlasting, none else can be eternal, *a parte ante*: yet there is no absurdity in supposing that all creatures are eternal, *a parte post*. All matter indeed is continually changing, and that into ten thousand forms. But that it is changeable does in no wise imply, that it is perishable. The substance may remain in one and the same, though under innumerable dif-

ferent forms. It is very poſſible any portion of Matter may be reſolved into the atoms of which it was originally compoſed. But what reaſon have we to believe, that one of theſe atoms ever was or ever will be annihilated? It never can, unleſs by the uncontroulable power of its Almighty Creator. And is it probable that ever he will exert this power, in unmaking any of the things that he hath made? In this alſo, God is *not a ſon of man that he ſhould repent.* Indeed every creature under heaven does, and muſt continually change its form: which we can now eaſily account for: as it clearly appears from late diſcoveries, that ethereal fire enters into the compoſition of every part of the creation. Now this is eſſentially *edax rerum.* It is the univerſal menſtruum, the diſcohere of all things under the ſun. By the force of this, even the ſtrongeſt, the firmeſt bodies are diſſolved. It appears from the experiment, repeatedly made by the great Lord *Bacon*, that even diamonds, by a high degree of heat, may be turned into duſt. And that in a ſtill higher degree, (ſtrange as it may ſeem) they will totally flame away. Yea, by this *the heavens* themſelves *will be diſſolved; the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat.* But they will be only diſſolved; not deſtroyed: they will melt; but they will not periſh. Though they loſe their preſent form, yet not a particle of them will ever loſe its exiſtence: but every atom of them will remain under one form or other to all eternity.

8. But ſtill we would enquire, What is this Eternity? How ſhall we pour any light upon this abſtruſe ſubject? It cannot be the object of our underſtanding. And with what compariſon

ſhall

ſhall we compare it? How infinitely does it tranſcend all theſe? What are any temporal things placed in compariſon with thoſe that are eternal? What is the duration of the long-lived Oak, of the ancient Caſtle, of *Trajan's* Pillar, of *Pompey's* Amphitheatre? What is the antiquity of the *Tuſcan* Urns, though probably older than the foundation of *Rome*; yea of the Pyramids of *Egypt*, ſuppoſe they have remained upwards of three thouſand years; when laid in the balance with Eternity? It vaniſhes into nothing. Nay, what is the duration of *the everlaſting hills*, figuratively ſo called, which have remained ever ſince the General Deluge, if not from the foundation of the world, in compariſon of Eternity? No more than an inſignificant cypher. Go farther yet. Conſider the duration, from the creation of the firſt-born ſons of God, of *Michael* the Archangel in particular, to the hour when he ſhall be commiſſioned to ſound his trumpet, and to utter his mighty voice through the vault of heaven, "Ariſe, ye dead, and come to judgment!" Is it not a moment, a point, a nothing in compariſon of unfathomable Eternity? Add to this a thouſand, a million of years, add a million of million of ages, before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made: what is all this in compariſon of that Eternity which is paſt? Is it not leſs, infinitely leſs, than a ſingle drop of water to the whole Ocean? Yea, immeaſurably leſs, than a day, an hour, a moment, to a million of ages. Go back a thouſand millions ſtill. Yet you are no nearer the beginning of Eternity.

9. Are we able to form a more adequate conception of Eternity to come? In order to this,

let us compare it with the several degrees of duration, which we are acquainted with. An Ephemeron fly, lives six hours, from six in the evening to twelve. This is a short life compared to that of a man, which continues threescore or fourscore years. And this itself is short, if it be compared to the nine hundred and sixty-nine years of *Methuselah*. Yet what are these years, yea all that have succeeded each other from the time that the heavens and the earth were erected, to the time when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth with the works of it shall be burnt up, if we compare it to the length of that duration, which never shall have an end!

10. In order to illustrate this, a late Author has repeated that striking thought of St. *Cyprian*. Suppose there were a ball of sand, as large as the globe of earth: suppose a grain of this sand were to be annihilated, reduced to nothing, in a thousand years: yet that whole space of duration, wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear infinitely less proportion to Eternity, Duration without end, than a single grain of sand would bear to all the mass.

11. To infix this important point the more deeply in your mind, consider another comparison. Suppose the Ocean to be so enlarged, as to include all the space between the Earth and the starry Heavens. Suppose a drop of this water to be annihilated, once in a thousand years: yet that whole space of duration, wherein this Ocean would be annihilating, at the rate of one drop in a thousand years, would be infinitely less in proportion to Eternity, than one drop of water to that whole Ocean.

Look

Look then at thoſe Immortal Spirits, whether they are in this, or the other world. When they ſhall have lived thouſands of thouſands of years, yea millions of millions of ages, their duration will be but juſt begun: they will be only upon the threſhold of Eternity.

12. But beſides this diviſion of Eternity into that which is paſt, and that which is to come, there is another diviſion of Eternity, which is of unſpeakable importance. That which is to come, as it relates to Immortal Spirits, is either a happy or a miſerable Eternity.

13. See the ſpirits of the righteous, that are already praiſing God in a happy Eternity. We are ready to ſay, How ſhort it will appear to thoſe who drink of the rivers of pleaſure at God's right-hand? We are ready to cry out,

"A day without night
They dwell in his ſight,
And Eternity ſeems as a day!"

But this is only ſpeaking after the manner of men. For the meaſures of long and ſhort, are only applicable to time, which admits of bounds, and not to unbounded duration. This rolls on (according to our low conceptions) with unutterable, inconceivable ſwiftneſs; if one would not rather ſay, it does not roll, or move at all, but is one, ſtill immoveable Ocean. For the inhabitants of heaven *ceaſe not day or night*, but *continually cry, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, the God, the Almighty: who was, and who is, and who is to come!* And when millions of millions of ages are elapſed, their Eternity is but juſt begun.

14. On

14. On the other hand, in what a condition are thoſe immortal Spirits, who have made choice of a miſerable Eternity? I ſay, made choice: for it is impoſſible this ſhould be the lot of any creature, but by his own act and deed. The day is coming, when every ſoul will be conſtrained to acknowledge, in the ſight of men and angels,

"No dire decree of thine did ſeal,
Or fix th' unalterable doom;
Conſign my unborn ſoul to hell,
Or damn me from my mother's womb."

In what condition, will ſuch a ſpirit be, after the ſentence is executed, *Depart ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?* Suppoſe him to be juſt now plunged into *the lake of fire, burning with brimſtone, where they have no reſt day or night, but the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever.* For ever and ever! Why, if we were only to be chained down one day, yea one hour, in a lake of fire: how amazingly long would one day, or one hour appear? I know not if it would not ſeem as a thouſand years. But, aſtoniſhing thought! After thouſands of thouſands, he has but juſt taſted of his bitter cup! After millions, it will be no nearer the end, than it was the moment it began.

15. What then is he, how fooliſh, how mad, in how unutterable a degree of diſtraction, who ſeeming to have the underſtanding of a man, deliberately prefers temporal things to eternal? Who (allowing that abſurd, impoſſible ſuppoſition, That wickedneſs is happineſs: a ſuppoſition

ſition utterly contrary to all reaſon, as well as to matter of fact) prefers the happineſs of a year, ſay a thouſand years, to the happineſs of Eternity? In compariſon of which, a thouſand ages are infinitely leſs than a year, a day, a moment? Eſpecially when we take this into the conſideration, (which indeed ſhould never be forgotten) That the refuſing a happy Eternity implies the chuſing of a miſerable Eternity. For there is not, cannot be any medium, between everlaſting joy and everlaſting pain. It is a vain thought, which ſome have entertained, that death will put an end to the ſoul as well as the body. It will put an end to neither the one nor the other; it will only alter the manner of their exiſtence. But when the body *returns to the duſt as it was, the ſpirit* will *return to God that gave it.* Therefore at the moment of death, it muſt be unſpeakably happy or unſpeakably miſerable. And that miſery will never end.

"Never! Where ſinks the ſoul at the dread ſound!
Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!"

How often would he, who had made the wretched choice, wiſh for the death both of his ſoul and body? It is not impoſſible, he might pray in ſome ſuch manner as Dr. *Young* ſuppoſes,

"When I have writh'd ten thouſand years in fire,
Ten thouſand, thouſand, let me then expire!"

16. Yet

16. Yet this unſpeakable folly, this unutterable madneſs, of preferring preſent things to eternal, is the diſeaſe of every man, born into the world, while in his natural ſtate. For ſuch is the conſtitution of our nature, that as the eye ſees only ſuch a portion of ſpace at once, ſo the mind ſees only ſuch a portion of time at once. And as all the ſpace that lies beyond this, is inviſible to the eye, ſo all the time which lies beyond that compaſs, is inviſible to the mind. So that we do not perceive, either the ſpace or the time, which is at a diſtance from us. The eye ſees diſtinctly the ſpace that is near it, with the objects which it contains. In like manner, the mind ſees diſtinctly thoſe objects which are within ſuch a diſtance of time. The eye does not ſee the beauties of *China*. They are at too great a diſtance. There is too great a ſpace between us and them: therefore we are not affected by them. They are as nothing to us: it is juſt the ſame to us, as if they had no being. For the ſame reaſon the mind does not ſee either the beauties or the terrors of Eternity. We are not at all affected by them, becauſe they are ſo diſtant from us. On this account it is, that they appear to us as nothing: juſt as if they had no exiſtence. Mean time we are wholly taken up with things preſent, whether in time or ſpace; and things appear leſs and leſs as they are more and more diſtant from us, either in one reſpect or the other. And ſo it muſt be; ſuch is the conſtitution of our nature, till nature is changed by almighty grace. But this is no manner of excuſe for thoſe who continue in their natural blindneſs

blindneſs to futurity: becauſe a remedy for it is provided, which is found by all that ſeek it. Yea, it is freely given to all that ſincerely aſk it.

17. This remedy is Faith. I do not mean, that which is the faith of a Heathen, who believes that there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him; but that which is deſigned by the Apoſtle, *An evidence*, or conviction *of things not ſeen:* a divine evidence and conviction of the inviſible and the eternal world. This alone opens the eyes of the underſtanding, to ſee God and the things of God. This, as it were, takes away, or renders tranſparent, the impenetrable veil,

"Which hangs 'twixt mortal and immortal being."

When

"Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds diſperſe, the ſhadows fly:
The inviſible appears in ſight,
And God is ſeen by mortal eye."

Accordingly, a believer (in the ſcriptural ſenſe) lives in eternity, and walks in eternity. His proſpect is enlarged. His view is not any longer bounded by preſent things: no, nor by an earthly hemiſphere, though it were, as *Milton* ſpeaks, "Tenfold the length of his Terrene." Faith places the unſeen, the eternal world continually before his face. Conſequently, he *looks not at the things that are ſeen:*

"Wealth,

" Wealth, honour, pleaſure, or what elſe,
This ſhort-enduring world can give."

Theſe are not his aim, the object of his purſuit, his deſire or happineſs: *but at the things that are not ſeen;* at the favour, the image and the glory of God: as well knowing, that *the things which are ſeen are temporal*, a vapour, a ſhadow, a dream that vaniſhes away; whereas *the things that are not ſeen are eternal*, real, ſolid, unchangeable.

18. What then can be a fitter employment for a wiſe man, than to meditate upon theſe things? Frequently to expand his thoughts, " beyond the bounds of this diurnal ſphere," and to expatiate above even the ſtarry heavens, in the fields of Eternity? What a means might it be, to confirm his contempt of the poor, little things of earth? When a man of huge poſſeſſions, was boaſting to his friend of the largeneſs of his eſtate, *Socrates* deſired him to bring a map of the earth, and to point out *Attica* therein. When this was done, (although not very eaſily, as it was a ſmall country) he next deſired *Alcibiades* to point out his own eſtate therein. When he could not do this, it was eaſy to obſerve how trifling the poſſeſſions were, in which he ſo prided himſelf, in compariſon of the whole earth? How applicable is this to the preſent caſe. Does any one value himſelf on his earthly poſſeſſions? Alas, what is the whole globe of earth, to the infinity of ſpace? A mere ſpeck of creation. And what is the life of man, yea the duration of the earth itſelf, but a ſpeck of time, if it be compared to the length of Eternity? Think of this! Let it

ſink

ſink into your thought, till you have ſome conception, however imperfect, of

That "boundleſs, fathomleſs abyſs,
Without a bottom or a ſhore."

19. But if naked Eternity, ſo to ſpeak, be ſo vaſt, ſo aſtoniſhing an object, as even to overwhelm your thought, how does it ſtill enlarge the idea to behold it clothed with either happineſs or miſery! Eternal bliſs or pain! Everlaſting happineſs, or everlaſting miſery? One would think it would ſwallow up every other thought, in every reaſonable creature. Allow me only this, "Thou art on the brink of either a happy or miſerable Eternity:" thy Creator bids thee now ſtretch out thy hand, either to the one or the other: and one would imagine, no rational creature, could think on any thing elſe. One would ſuppoſe, that this ſingle point would engroſs his whole attention. Certainly it ought ſo to do: certainly if theſe things are ſo, there can be but one thing needful. O let you and I at leaſt, whatever others do, chuſe that better part which ſhall never be taken away from us!

20. Before I cloſe this ſubject, permit me to touch upon two remarkable paſſages, in the Pſalms (one in the 8th, the other in the 144th which bear a near relation to it. The former is, *When I conſider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the ſtars, which thou haſt ordained: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?* Here man is conſidered as a cypher, a point, compared to Immenſity. The latter is, *Lord, what is man, that thou haſt ſuch reſpect unto him?*

Man is like a thing of naught; his time paſſeth away like a ſhadow! In the new tranſlation, the words are ſtronger ſtill. *What is man that thou takeſt knowledge of him? Or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?* Here the Pſalmiſt ſeems to conſider the life of man as a moment, a nothing, compared to Eternity. Is not the purport of the former, How can He that filleth heaven and earth, take knowledge of ſuch an atom as man? How is it that he is not utterly loſt in the immenſity of God's works? Is not the purport of the latter, How can He, that inhabiteth eternity, ſtoop to regard the creature of a day? One whoſe life paſſeth away like a ſhadow? Is not this a thought which has ſtruck many ſerious minds, as well as it did David's, and created a kind of fear, leſt they ſhould be forgotten before Him, who graſps all Space and all Eternity? But does not this fear ariſe from a kind of ſuppoſition, that God is ſuch an one as ourſelves? If we conſider boundleſs ſpace or boundleſs Duration, we ſhrink into nothing before it. But God is not a man. A day, and million of ages are the ſame with Him. Therefore there is the ſame diſproportion, between Him and any finite being, as between Him and the creature of a day. Therefore whenever that thought recurs, whenever you are tempted to fear, leſt you ſhould be forgotten by the immenſe, the eternal God, remember that nothing is little or great, that no Duration is long or ſhort before Him. Remember that God *ita præſidet ſingulis ſicut univerſis, & univerſis ſicut ſingulis.* That he preſides over every individual, as over the

the univerſe; and the univerſe, as over each individual. So that you may boldly ſay,

Father, how wide thy glories ſhine,
Lord of the univerſe and mine!
Thy goodneſs watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one ſoul;
Yet counts my ev'ry ſacred hair,
As I remained thy ſingle care!

SERMON LVI.

ON THE TRINITY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Some days since I was desired to preach on this text. I did so yesterday morning. In the afternoon I was pressed to write down and print my Sermon if possible, before I left *Cork*. I have wrote it this morning: but I must beg the Reader to make allowance for the disadvantages I am under; as I have not here any books to consult, nor indeed any time to consult them.

Cork, May 8, 1775.

1 JOHN v. 7.

There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One.

1. WHATSOEVER the generality of people may think, it is certain that opinion is not religion: no, not right opinion, assent

assent to one, or to ten thousand truths. There is a wide difference between them: even right opinion is as different from religion as the East is from the West. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all. And on the other hand, persons may be truly religious who hold many wrong opinions. Can any one possibly doubt of this, while there are *Romanists* in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, (as *Thomas à Kempis*, *Gregory Lopez*, and the Marquis *de Renty*,) but that many of them, even at this day, are real, inward Christians? And yet what an heap of erroneous opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their fathers? Nay, who can doubt of it, while there are *Calvinists* in the world? Asserters of absolute Predestination? For who will dare to affirm that none of these are truly religious men? Not only many of them in the last century were burning and shining lights, but many of them are now real Christians, loving God and all mankind. And yet what are all the absurd opinions of all the *Romanists* in the world, compared to that one, That the God of Love, the wise, just, merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh, has from all eternity fixed an absolute, unchangeable, irresistible decree, that part of mankind shall be saved, do what they will, and the rest damned, do what they can!

2. Hence we cannot but infer, that there are ten thousand mistakes, which may consist with real religion: with regard to which every candid, considerate man will think and let think. But there are some truths more important than others.

It seems there are some which are of deep importance. I do not term them *fundamental* truths; because that is an ambiguous word: and hence there have been so many warm disputes, about the number of *fundamentals*. But surely there are some, which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a close connexion with vital religion. And doubtless we may rank among these, that contained in the words above cited, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One.*

3. I do not mean, that it is of importance, to believe this or that *explication* of these words. I know not, that any well-judging man would attempt to explain them at all. One of the best tracts which that great man, Dean *Swift* ever wrote, was his Sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he shews, that all who endeavoured to explain it at all, have utterly lost their way: have above all other persons hurt the cause, which they intended to promote; having only, as *Job* speaks, *darkened counsel, by words without knowledge.* It was in an evil hour, that these explainers began their fruitless work. I insist upon no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the Creed commonly ascribed to *Athanasius*. I am far from saying, He who does not assent to this, "shall without doubt perish everlastingly." For the sake of that and another clause, I for some time scrupled subscribing to that Creed; till I considered, 1. That these sentences only *relate* to *wilful*, not involuntary unbelievers: to those who having all the means of knowing the truth, nevertheless obstinately reject it:

it: 2. That they relate only to the *ſubſtance* of the doctrine there delivered; not the philoſophical *illuſtrations* of it.

4. I dare not inſiſt upon any one's uſing the word *Trinity* or *Perſon*. I uſe them myſelf without any ſcruple, becauſe I know of none better. But if any man has any ſcruple concerning them, who ſhall conſtrain him to uſe them; I cannot; much leſs would I burn a man alive, and that with moiſt, green wood, for ſaying, "Though I believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghoſt is God, yet I ſcruple uſing the words *Trinity* and *Perſons*, becauſe *I do* not find thoſe terms in the Bible." Theſe are the words which merciful *John Calvin* cites as wrote by *Servetus* in a letter to himſelf. I would inſiſt only on the direct words unexplained, juſt as they lie in the text, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt: and theſe Three are One.*

5. "As they lie in the text:"—But here ariſes a queſtion, Is that text genuine? Was it originally written by the Apoſtle, or inſerted in later ages? Many have doubted of this: and in particular that great light of the Chriſtian Church, lately removed to the Church above, *Bengelius*, the moſt pious, the moſt judicious, and the moſt laborious, of all the modern commentators on the New Teſtament. For ſome time he ſtood in doubt of its authenticity, becauſe it is wanting in many of the ancient copies. But his doubts were removed by three conſiderations: 1. That though it is wanting in many copies, yet it was found in more, and thoſe copies of the greateſt authority: 2. That it is cited

cited by a whole train of ancient writers, from the time of St. *John* to that of *Conſtantine*. This argument is concluſive: for they could not have cited it, had it not then been in the ſacred canon. 3. That we can eaſily account for its being after that time wanting in many copies, when we remember, that *Conſtantine's* ſucceſſor was a zealous Arian, who uſed every means to promote his bad cauſe, to ſpread Arianiſm throughout the empire: in particular, the eraſing this text out of as many copies as fell into his hands. And he ſo far prevailed, that the age in which he lived, is commonly ſtiled *Seculum Arianum*, the Arian age: there being then only one eminent man, who oppoſed him at the peril of his life. So that it was a proverb, "*Athanaſius contra mundum*;" Athanaſius againſt the world.

6. But it is objected, "whatever becomes of the text, we cannot believe what we cannot comprehend. When therefore you require us to believe myſteries, we pray you to have us excuſed."

Here is a two-fold miſtake. 1. We do not require you to believe any myſtery in this, whereas you ſuppoſe, the contrary. But 2. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend.

To begin with the latter. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a *Sun* over your head. But whether he ſtands ſtill in the midſt of his ſyſtem, or not only revolves on his own axis, but *rejoiceth as a giant to run his courſe*; you cannot comprehend either one or the other. *How* he moves, or *how* he reſts: by what power, what

what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid ether? You cannot deny the fact: yet you cannot account for it, so as to satisfy any rational enquirer. You may indeed give us the hypothesis of *Ptolemy*, *Tycho Brahe*, *Copernicus*, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am sick of them, I care not three straws for them all.

"Each new solution but once more affords
New change of terms, and scaffolding of words:
In other garb my question I receive,
And take my doubt the very same I gave."

Still I insist, the *fact* you believe: you cannot deny. But the *manner* you cannot comprehend.

8. You believe there is such a thing as *light*, whether flowing from the sun, or any other luminous body. But you cannot comprehend either its nature, or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the earth in eight minutes, two hundred thousand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the candle brought into the room, instantly disperse into every corner? Again. Here are three candles, yet there is but one light. Explain this, and I will explain the Three-One God.

9. You believe there is such a thing as *air*. It both covers you as a garment, and

"Wide interfus'd
Embraces round this florid earth."

But can you comprehend, How? Can you give me

me a satisfactory account of its nature, or the cause of its properties? Think only of one, its elasticity: can you account for this? It may be owing to electric fire attached to each particle of it: It may not: and neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it, till we can comprehend it, our life is very near its period.

10. You believe there is such a thing as *earth*. Here, you fix your foot upon it. You are supported by it. But do you comprehend what it is that supports the earth? "O, an elephant, says a *Malabarian* Philosopher: and a bull supports him." But what supports the bull? The *Indian* and the *Briton* are equally at a loss for an answer. We know it is God that *spreadeth the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing*. This is the fact. But how? Who can account for this? Perhaps angelic, but not human creatures.

I know what is plausibly said concerning the powers of projection and attraction. But spin as fine as we can, matter of fact sweeps away our cobweb hypothesis. Connect the force of projection and attraction how you can, they will never produce a circular motion. The moment the projected steel comes within the attraction of the magnet, it does not form a curve, but drops down.

11. You believe you have a *soul*. "Hold there, says the Doctor:* I believe no such thing. If *you* have an immaterial soul, so have the brutes too." I will not quarrel with any that think they have; nay, I wish he could prove it.

* Dr. *Bl—r*, in his late tract.

it. And ſurely I would rather allow *them* ſouls, than I would give up my own. In this I cordially concur in the ſentiment of the honeſt heathen, "*Si erro, libenter erro; & me redargui valde recuſem.*" If I err, I err willingly; and I vehemently refuſe to be convinced of it. And I truſt moſt of thoſe who do not believe a Trinity are of the ſame mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a ſoul connected with this houſe of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly cold? You underſtand juſt nothing of the matter. So it is: But how, none can tell.

12. You ſurely believe, you have a *body*, together with your ſoul, and that each is dependant on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand: immediately pain is felt in your ſoul? On the other ſide, is ſhame felt in your ſoul? Inſtantly a bluſh overſpreads your cheek. Does the ſoul feel fear or violent anger? preſently the body trembles. Theſe alſo are facts which you cannot deny: nor can you account for them.

13. I bring but one inſtance more. At the command of your ſoul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? for the connexion between the act of the mind, and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for *muſcular motion* at all, in any inſtance of it whatever? When one of the moſt ingenious phyſicians in *England* had finiſhed his lecture upon that head, he added,—"now, gentlemen, I have told you all the diſcoveries of our enlightened age. And now, if you underſtand one

jot

jot of the matter you underſtand more than I do.

The ſhort of the matter is this. Thoſe who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, muſt not believe, that there is a *ſun* in the firmament, that there is *light* ſhining around them, that there is *air*, though it incompaſſes them on every ſide, that there is any *earth* though they ſtand upon it. They muſt not believe that they have a *ſoul*, no, nor that they have a *body*.

14. But, ſecondly, as ſtrange as it may ſeem, in requiring you to believe, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and thoſe Three are One:* you are not required to believe any myſtery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. *Peter Browne*, ſometime Biſhop of *Cork*, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any myſtery at all. The Bible barely requires you to believe ſuch *facts*, not the manner of them. Now the myſtery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the *manner*.

For inſtance. *God ſaid, let there be light, and there was light.* I believe it: I believe the plain *fact*: there is no myſtery at all in this. The myſtery lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all: nor does God require it of me.

Again. *The word was made fleſh.* I believe this fact alſo. There is no myſtery in it; but as to the *manner*, *how* he was made fleſh, wherein the myſtery lies, I know nothing about it, I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my underſtanding.

15. To apply this to the caſe before us. *There are three that bear record in Heaven.—And theſe are one.* I believe this *fact* alſo, (if I may uſe the expreſſion) that God is Three and One. But the *manner, how*, I do not comprehend: and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner*, lies the myſtery: and ſo it may; I have no concern with it. It is no object of my faith; I believe juſt ſo much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner* he has not revealed: therefore I believe nothing about it. But would it not be abſurd in me, to deny the fact, becauſe I do not underſtand the manner? That is, to reject *what God has revealed*, becauſe I do not comprehend, *what he has not revealed.*

16. This is a point much to be obſerved. There are many things *which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Part of theſe God hath *revealed to us by his Spirit: revealed*, that is, unveiled, uncovered: that part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed: that we need not, and indeed cannot believe: it is far above, out of our ſight.

Now where is the wiſdom of rejecting what is revealed, becauſe we do not underſtand what is not revealed? Of denying the *fact*, which God has unveiled, becauſe we cannot ſee the *manner*, which is veiled ſtill?

17. Eſpecially when we conſider that what God has been pleaſed to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference, is a truth of the laſt importance. It enters into the very heart of Chriſtianity; it lies at the root of all vital religion.

Unleſs theſe three are one, how can *all men honour the Son even as they honour the Father?* I know not what to do, ſays *Socinus* in a letter to his friend, with my untoward followers. They will not worſhip Jeſus Chriſt. I tell them, it is written, *Let all the Angels of God worſhip him.* They anſwer, however that be, if he is not God, we dare not worſhip him. For *it is written, Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*

But the thing which I here particularly mean is this: the knowledge of the three-one God, is interwoven with all true Chriſtian faith, with all vital religion.

I do not ſay, that every real Chriſtian can ſay with the Marquis *de Renty*, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the preſence of the ever bleſſed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of *babes*, but rather *fathers in Chriſt*.

But I know not how any one can be a Chriſtian believer, till he *hath* (as St. *John* ſpeaks) the *witneſs in himſelf:* till *the Spirit* of *God witneſſes with his ſpirit, that he is a child of God:* that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghoſt witneſſes that God the Father has accepted him, through the merits of God the Son; and having this witneſs, he honours the Son, and the bleſſed Spirit, *even as he honours the Father.*

18. Not that every Chriſtian believer *adverts* to this; perhaps at firſt not one in twenty; but if you aſk any of them a few queſtions, you will eaſily find it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any

any to have vital religion, who denies that these three are one. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved, during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance) but that God, before they go hence, will *bring them to the knowledge of the truth.*

SERMON LVII.

God's Approbation of his Works.

Genesis i. 31.

And God saw every thing that he had made: and behold, it was very good.

1. WHEN God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, at the concluſion of each day's work it is ſaid, *And God ſaw that it was good.* Whatever was created was good in its kind, ſuited to the end for which it was deſigned, adapted to promote the good of the whole, and the glory of the great Creator. This ſentence it pleaſed God to paſs, with regard to each particular creature. But there is a remarkable variation of the expreſſion, with regard to all the parts of the Univerſe, taken in connexion with each other, and conſtituting one ſyſtem. *And God ſaw every thing that he had made: and beheld, it was very good!*

2. How

2. How ſmall a part of this great work of God is man able to underſtand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to underſtand as much of it as we are able. For *the merciful Lord*, as the Pſalmiſt obſerves, *hath ſo done his marvellous works*, of Creation as well as of Providence, *that they ought to be had in remembrance* by all that fear him, which they cannot well be, unleſs they are underſtood. Let us then by the aſſiſtance of that Spirit who giveth unto man underſtanding, endeavour to take a general ſurvey of the works which God made in this lower world, as they were, before they were diſordered and depraved, in conſequence of the ſin of man: we ſhall then eaſily ſee, that as every creature was *good* in its primeval ſtate; ſo when all were compacted in one general Syſtem, *behold, they were very good.* I do not remember to have ſeen any attempt of this kind, unleſs in that truly excellent poem, (termed by Mr. *Hutchinſon*, *That wicked farce:*) *Milton's* Paradiſe Loſt.

I. 1. *In the beginning God created the matter of the heavens and the earth.* (So the words, as a great man obſerves, may properly be tranſlated.) He firſt created the four Elements, out of which the whole Univerſe was compoſed, Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, all mingled together in one common maſs. The groſſeſt part of this, the earth and water, were utterly without form, till God infuſed a principle of motion, commanding the Air to move *upon the face of the waters.* In the next place, *the Lord God ſaid, Let there be light: and there was light.* Here were the four conſtituent parts of the univerſe: the true, original,

ſimple Elements. They were all eſſentially diſtinct from each other: and yet ſo intimately mixt together in all compound bodies, that we cannot find any, be it ever ſo minute, which does not contain them all.

2. *And God ſaw that* every one of theſe *was good*, was perfect in its kind. The *earth* was good: the whole ſurface of it was beautiful in an high degree. To make it more agreeable,

"He clothed
'The univerſal face with pleaſant green."

He adorned it with flowers of every hue, and with ſhrubs and trees of every kind. And every part was fertile as well as beautiful: it was no where deformed by rough or ragged rocks: it did not ſhock the view with horrid precipices, huge chaſms, or dreary caverns: with deep, impaſſable moraſſes, or deſerts of barren ſand. But we have not any authority to ſay, with ſome learned and ingenious Authors, That there were no mountains on the original earth, no unevenneſſes on its ſurface. It is not eaſy to reconcile this hypotheſis, with thoſe words of *Moſes*, *The waters increaſed—and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward* (above the higheſt) *did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered*, Gen. vii. 19, 20. We have no reaſon to believe, that theſe mountains were produced by the deluge itſelf. Not the leaſt intimation of this is given: therefore we cannot doubt but they exiſted before it: indeed they anſwered many excellent purpoſes, beſide greatly increaſing the beauty of the creation, by a variety of proſpects, which had been totally loſt,

loft. had the earth been one extended plain. Yet we need not fuppofe their fides were abrupt, or difficult of afcent. It is highly probable, that they rofe and fell, by almoft infenfible degrees.

3. As to the internal parts of the earth, even to this day, we have fcarce any knowledge of them. Many have fuppofed the centre of the globe to be furrounded with an abyfs of fire. Many others have imagined it to be incompaffed with an abyfs of water; which they fuppofed to be termed in fcripture, *the great deep*, Gen. vii. 11: all the fountains of which were broken up, in order to the general deluge. But however this was, we are fure all things were difpofed therein, with the moft perfect order and harmony. Hence there were no agitations within the bowels of the globe: no violent convulfions: no concuffions of the earth; no earthquakes: but all was unmoved as the pillars of heaven. There were then no fuch thing as eruptions of fire: there were no volcanos, or burning mountains. Neither Vefuvius, Ætna nor Hecla, if they had any being, then poured out fmoke and flame: but were covered with a verdant mantle, from the top to the bottom.

4. The Element of *Water*, it is probable, was then moftly confined within the great abyfs. In the new earth (as we are informed by the Apoftle, Rev. xxi. 1.) *There will be no more fea:* none covering as now the face of the earth, and rendering fo large a part of it uninhabitable by man. Hence it is probable, there was no external fea in the paradifiacal earth: none, until the great deep burft the barriers which were originally appointed for it; indeed there was not then that need

need of the ocean for navigation, which there is now. For either (as the poet ſuppoſes)

Omnis tulit omnia tellus;

Every country produced whatever was requiſite either for the neceſſity or comfort of its inhabitants: or man being then (as he will be again at the reſurrection) equal to angels, was able to convey himſelf at his pleaſure, to any given diſtance. Over and above that thoſe flaming meſſengers were always ready to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation. But whether there was ſea or not, there were rivers ſufficient to water the earth and make it very plenteous. Theſe anſwered all the purpoſes of convenience and pleaſure:

By "liquid lapſe of murmuring ſtream."

To which were added gentle, genial ſhowers, with ſalutary miſts and exhalations. But there were no putrid lakes, no turbid or ſtagnating waters: but only

Such as "bore impreſt
Fair Nature's image on their placid breaſt."

5. The Element of *Air* was then always ſerene, and always friendly to man. It contained no frightful meteor, no unwholſome vapours, no poiſonous exhalations. There were no tempeſts, but only cool and gentle breezes,

Genitabilis aura Favoni

fanning

fanning both man and beaſt, and wafting the fragrant odours on their ſilent wings.

6. The Sun, the fountain of *Fire*,

" Of this great world both Eye and Soul,"

was ſituated at the moſt exact diſtance from the earth, ſo as to yield a ſufficient quantity of heat, (neither too little nor too much,) to every part of it. God had not yet

" Bid his angels turn aſkance
This oblique globe."

There was therefore, then no country that groaned under

" The rage of Arctos, and eternal froſt."

There was no violent winter, or ſultry ſummer; no extreme either of heat or cold. No ſoil was burned up by the ſolar heat: none uninhabitable through the want of it. Thus Earth, Water, Air and Fire all conſpired together to the welfare and pleaſure of man.

7. To the ſame purpoſe ſerved the grateful viciſſitude of light and darkneſs, day and night. For as the human body, though not liable to death or pain, yet it needed continual ſuſtenance by food, ſo although it was not liable to wearineſs, yet it needed continual reparation by ſleep. By this the ſprings of the animal machine were wound up from time to time, and kept always fit for the pleaſing labour, for which man was deſigned by his Creator. Accordingly *the evening and the morning were the firſt day*, before ſin or pain

pain was in the world. The firſt natural day had one part dark, for a ſeaſon of repoſe; one part light, for a ſeaſon of labour. And even in paradiſe *Adam ſlept*, (chap. ii. 21,) before he ſinned; ſleep therefore belonged to innocent human nature. Yet I do not apprehend, it can be inferred from hence, that there is either darkneſs or ſleep in heaven. Surely there is no darkneſs in that city of God. Is it not expreſsly ſaid, (Rev. xxii. 5.) *There ſhall be no night there!* Indeed they have no light from the ſun; but *the Lord giveth them light*. So it is all day in heaven as it is all night in hell. On earth we have a mixture of both. Day and night ſucceed each other, till earth ſhall be turned to heaven. Neither can we at all credit the account given by the ancient poet, concerning ſleep in heaven; although he allows *cloud compelling Jove* to remain awake, while the inferior gods were ſleeping. 'Tis pity therefore that our great poet ſhould copy ſo ſervilely after the old heathen, as to tell us,

"Sleep had ſeal'd
All but the unſleeping eyes of God himſelf."

Not ſo: they that *are before the throne of God* ſerve *him day and night*, (ſpeaking after the manner of men,) *in his temple*, Rev. vii. 15. That is, without any interval. As wicked ſpirits are tormented day and night, without any intermiſſion of their miſery: ſo holy ſpirits enjoy God day and night, without any intermiſſion of their happineſs.

8. On the ſecond day God encompaſſed the terraqueous globe with that noble appendage, the Atmoſphere, conſiſting chiefly of air, but replete

plete with earthly particles of various kinds, and with huge volumes of water, sometimes invisible, sometimes visible, buoyed up by that ethereal fire, a particle of which cleaves to every particle of air. By this the water was divided into innumerable drops, which descending, watered the earth and made it very plenteous, without incommoding any of its inhabitants. For there were then no impetuous currents of air, no tempestuous winds; no furious hail, no torrents of rain, no rolling thunders or forky lightnings. One perennial spring was perpetually smiling over the whole surface of the earth.

9. On the third day God commanded all kind of vegetables to spring out of the earth. And then to add thereto innumerable herbs, intermixed with flowers of all hues. To these were added shrubs of every kind, together with tall and stately trees, whether for shade, for timber or for fruit, in endless variety. Some of these were adapted to particular climates or particular exposures: while vegetables of more general use, (as wheat in particular,) were not confined to one country, but would flourish almost in every climate. But among all these there were no weeds, no useless plants, none that incumbered the ground. Much less were there any poisonous ones, tending to hurt any one creature: but every thing was salutary in its kind, suitable to the gracious design of its great Creator.

10. The Lord now created *the Sun to rule the day, and the Moon to govern the night.* The Sun was, as observed before

"Of this great world both eye and soul."

The

The eye, making all things visible: distributing light to every part of the system, and thereby rejoicing both earth and sky: and the soul, the principle of all life, whether to vegetables or animals. Some of the uses of the Moon we are acquainted with: her causing the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, and influencing, in a greater or smaller degree, all the fluids in the terraqueous globe. And many other uses she may have, unknown to us, but known to the wise Creator. But it is certain, she had no hurtful, no unwholesome influence on any living creature; *he made the Stars also:* both those that move round the Sun, whether of the primary or secondary order: or those that being at a far greater distance, appear to us as fixt in the firmament of heaven. Whether *comets* are to be numbered among the stars, and whether they were parts of the original creation, is perhaps not so easy to determine, at least with certainty: as we have nothing but probable conjecture, either concerning their nature or their use. We know not, whether (as some ingenious men have imagined they are ruined worlds; worlds that have undergone a general conflagration: or whether (as others not improbably suppose) they are immense reservoirs of fluids, appointed to revolve at certain seasons, and to supply the still decreasing moisture of the earth. But certain we are, that they did not either produce or portend any evil. They did not (as many have fancied since,)

"From their horrid hair
Shake pestilence and war."

11. The

11. The Lord God afterward peopled the earth with animals of every kind. He firſt commanded the waters to bring forth abundantly; to bring forth creatures which as they inhabited a groſſer element, ſo they were in general of a more ſtupid nature, endowed with fewer ſenſes and leſs underſtanding than other animals. The bivalved ſhell fiſh in particular, ſeem to have no ſenſe but that of feeling, unleſs perhaps a low meaſure of taſte: ſo that they are but one degree above vegetables. And even the king of the waters (a title which ſome give the Whale, becauſe of his enormous magnitude) though he has ſight added to taſte and feeling, does not appear to have an underſtanding proportioned to his bulk. Rather, he is inferior therein not only to moſt birds and beaſts, but to the generality of even reptiles and inſects. However, none of theſe then attempted to devour, or in anywiſe hurt one another. All were peaceful and quiet, as were the watery fields wherein they ranged at pleaſure.

12. It ſeems the inſect-kinds were at leaſt one degree above the inhabitants of the waters. Almoſt all theſe too devour one another, and every other creature which they can conquer. Indeed, ſuch is the miſerably diſordered ſtate of the world at preſent, that innumerable creatures can no otherwiſe preſerve their own lives, than by deſtroying others. But in the beginning it was not ſo. The paradiſiacal earth afforded a ſufficiency of food for all its inhabitants. So that none of them had any need of temptation to prey upon the other. The ſpider was then as harmleſs as the fly, and did not then lie in wait for blood. The weakeſt of them crept ſecurely over the

earth, or ſpread their gilded wings in the air, that wavered in the breeze and glittered in the ſun, without any to make them afraid. Mean time the reptiles of every kind were equally harmleſs, and more intelligent than they. Yea, one ſpecies of them *was more ſubtle*, or knowing *than any of the* brute creation *which God had made.*

13. But in general, the *birds*, created to fly in the open firmament of heaven, appear to have been of an order far ſuperior to either inſects or reptiles: although ſtill conſiderably inferior to *beaſts:* (as we now reſtrain that word to quadrupeds, four-footed animals, which two hundred years ago included every kind of living creatures.) Many ſpecies of theſe are not only endowed with a large meaſure of natural underſtanding, but are likewiſe capable of much improvement by art, ſuch as one would not readily conceive. But among all theſe there were no birds or beaſts of prey: none that deſtroyed or moleſted another: but all the creatures breathed in their ſeveral kinds, the benevolence of their great Creator.

14. Such was the ſtate of the creation, according to the ſcanty ideas which we can now form concerning it, when its great Author ſurveying the whole ſyſtem at one view, pronounced it *very good!* It was good in the higheſt degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil. Every part was exactly ſuited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was "*a golden chain* (to uſe the expreſſion of *Plato*) let down from the throne of God," an exactly connected ſeries of beings, from the higheſt to the loweſt; from dead earth, through foſſils, vegetables, animals, to man, created in the

the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and enjoy his Creator to all eternity.

II. 1. Here is a firm foundation laid on which we may stand, and answer all the cavils of minute philosophers; all the objections which *vain men* who *would be wise*, make to the goodness or wisdom of God in the creation. All these are grounded upon an entire mistake, namely, That the world is now in the same state it was at the beginning. And upon this supposition they plausibly build abundance of objections. But all these objections fall to the ground, when we observe this supposition cannot be admitted. The world at the beginning was in a totally different state, from that wherein we find it now. Object therefore whatever you please to the present state, either of the animate or inanimate creation, whether in general, or with regard to any particular instances, and the answer is ready, These are not now as they were in the beginning. Had you therefore heard that vain King of Castile, crying out with exquisite self-sufficiency, "If I had made the world, I would have made it better than God Almighty has made it;" you might have replied, "No: God Almighty, whether you know it or not, did not make it as it is now. He himself made it better, unspeakably better than it is at present. He made it without any blemish, yea without any defect. He made no corruption, no destruction in the inanimate creation. He made not death in the animal creation, neither its harbingers; sin and pain. If you will not believe his own account, believe your brother heathen. It was only

Poſt ignem ætherea domo
Subductum——

that is, in plain Engliſh, After man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, that

Macies & nova febrium
Terris incubuit colors:

that a whole army of evils, totally new, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overſpread the face of the earth.

2. "Nay, (ſays one who miſſed his way in attempting to apologize for his maker) God is not to blame for either the natural or moral evils that are in the world. For he made it as well as he could: ſeeing evil muſt exiſt, in the very nature of things." It muſt, *in the preſent nature* of things, ſuppoſing man to have rebelled againſt God. But evil did not exiſt at all in the original nature of things. It was no more the neceſſary reſult of matter, than it was the neceſſary reſult of ſpirit. All things then, without exception, were very good. And how ſhould they be otherwiſe? There was no defect at all in the power of God, any more than in his goodneſs or wiſdom. His goodneſs inclined him to make all things good: and this was executed by his power and wiſdom. Let poor ignorant man then be aſhamed of making ſuch miſerable *excuſes* for his Creator! He needs none of us to make *apologies*, either for him or for his creation! *As for God, his* way is perfect: and ſuch originally were all his works. And

ſuch

ſuch they will be again, when *the Son of God* ſhall have *deſtroyed all the works of the devil.*

3. Upon this ground then, that *God made man upright*, and every creature perfect in its kind, but that man *found out to himſelf many inventions*, of happineſs independent of God: and that by his apoſtacy from God, he threw not only himſelf, but likewiſe the whole creation, which was intimately connected with him, into diſorder, miſery, death: upon this ground I ſay, we do not find it difficult, to

"Juſtify the ways of God with men."

For although he left man in the hand of his own counſel, to chuſe good or evil, life or death; although he did not take away the liberty he had given him, but ſuffered him to chuſe death, in conſequence of which the whole creation now groaneth together: yet when we conſider all the evils introduced into the creation, may work together for our good: yea, may work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: we may well praiſe God, for permitting theſe temporary evils, in order to our eternal good: yea, we may well cry out, *O the depth both of* the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God! He hath done all things well. Glory be unto God, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!

SERMON LVIII.

ON THE FALL OF MAN.

GENESIS iii. 19.

Duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return.

1. WHY is there *pain* in the world? Seeing God is *loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works?* Becauſe there is *ſin*: had there been no ſin, there would have been no pain. But pain, (ſuppoſing God to be juſt,) is the neceſſary effect of ſin. But why is there ſin in the world? Becauſe man was created in the image of God: becauſe he is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without ſenſe or underſtanding, but a ſpirit, like his Creator: a being endued not only with ſenſe and underſtanding, but alſo with a will exerting itſelf in various affections. To crown all the reſt, he was endued with liberty, a power of directing his own

own affections and actions, a capacity of determining himſelf, or of chuſing good or evil. Indeed had not man been endued with this, all the reſt would have been of no uſe. Had he not been a free, as well as intelligent being, his underſtanding would have been as ~~a~~ incapable of holineſs, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of chuſing good or evil, he choſe the latter; he choſe evil. Thus *ſin entered into the world*, and pain of every kind, preparatory to *death*.

2. But this plain, ſimple account of the origin of evil, whether natural or moral, all the wiſdom of man could not diſcover, till it pleaſed God to reveal it to the world. Till then man was a mere enigma to himſelf, a riddle which none but God could ſolve. And in how full and ſatisfactory a manner, has he ſolved it in this chapter? In ſuch a manner, as does not indeed ſerve to gratify vain curioſity, but as is abundantly ſufficient to anſwer a nobler end; to

"Juſtify the ways of God with man."

To this great end, I would Firſt, briefly conſider the preceding part of this chapter, and then Secondly, more particularly weigh the ſolemn words, which have been already recited.

I. 1. In the firſt place, let us briefly conſider the preceding part of this chapter. *Now the ſerpent was more ſubtil*, or intelligent *than any beaſt of the field which the Lord God had made*, ver. 1. Endued with more underſtanding than any other animal in the brute creation. Indeed there is

no

no improbability in the conjecture of an ingenious man,* That the ſerpent was endued with reaſon, which is now the property of man. And this accounts for a circumſtance, which on any other ſuppoſition would be utterly unintelligible. How comes Eve not to be ſurpriſed, yea ſtartled and affrighted, at hearing the ſerpent *ſpeak* and *reaſon?* Unleſs ſhe knew that reaſon, and ſpeech in conſequence of it, were the original properties of the ſerpent? Hence, without ſhewing any ſurpriſe, ſhe immediately enters into converſation with him. *And he ſaid unto the woman, yea, hath God ſaid, Ye ſhall not eat of every tree of the garden?* See how he who was a liar from the beginning mixes truth and falſehood together? Perhaps on purpoſe, that ſhe might be the more inclined to ſpeak, in order to clear God of the unjuſt charge. Accordingly the woman *ſaid unto the ſerpent*, (ver. 2.) *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the tree in the midſt of the garden, God hath ſaid, Ye ſhall not eat of it: neither ſhall ye touch it, leſt ye die.* Thus far ſhe appears to have been clear of blame. But how long did ſhe continue ſo? *And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, Surely ye ſhall not die. For God doth know, in the day ye eat thereof your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as gods, knowing good and evil*, ver. 4, 5. Here ſin began, namely, unbelief. *The woman was deceived*, ſays the Apoſtle. She believed a lie: ſhe gave more credit to the word of the devil, than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual ſin. *When the woman ſaw that the tree was good for food, and pleaſant to the eyes, and to be deſired to make one wiſe, ſhe took of the fruit and did eat*, and ſo completed

* The late Dr. Nicholas Robinſon.

pleated her ſin. But *the man*, as the Apoſtle obſerves *was not deceived*. How then came he to join in the tranſgreſſion! *She gave unto her huſband, and he did* eat. He ſinned with his eyes open. He rebelled againſt his Creator, as is highly probable,

"Not by ſtronger reaſon mov'd,
But fondly overcome with female charms."

And if this was the caſe, there is no abſurdity in the aſſertion of a great man, "That Adam ſinned in his heart, before he ſinned outwardly, before he ate of the forbidden fruit," namely, by inward idolatry, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

2. Immediately pain followed ſin. When he loſt his innocence, he loſt his happineſs. He painfully feared that God, in love of whom his ſupreme happineſs before conſiſted. *He ſaid* (ver. 10,) *I heard thy voice in the garden; and I was afraid.* He fled from Him, who was till then his deſire, and glory, and joy. He *hid himſelf from the preſence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden!* Hid himſelf! What, from the all-ſeeing eye? The eye which, with one glance, pervades heaven and earth? See how his underſtanding likewiſe was impaired! What amazing folly was this! Such as one would imagine very few even of his poſterity could have fallen into. So dreadfully was his *fooliſh heart darkened* by ſin, and guilt, and ſorrow, and fear! His innocence was loſt; and at the ſame time, his happineſs and his wiſdom! Here is the clear, intelligible anſwer to that queſtion, How came evil into the world?

3. One

3. One cannot but obſerve, throughout this whole narration, the inexpreſſible tenderneſs, and lenity of the Almighty Creator, from whom they had revolted; the ſovereign againſt whom they had rebelled. *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and ſaid unto him, Where art thou?* Thus graciouſly calling him to return, who would otherwiſe have eternally fled from God. *And he ſaid, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, becauſe I was naked.* Still here is no acknowledgment of his fault, no humiliation for it. But with what aſtoniſhing tenderneſs does God lead him to make that acknowledgment? *And he ſaid, Who told thee that thou waſt naked?* How cameſt thou to make this diſcovery? *Haſt thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou ſhouldſt not eat? And the man ſaid* (ſtill unhumbled, yea indirectly throwing the blame upon God himſelf,) *The woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God,* ſtill endeavouring to bring them to repentance, *ſaid unto the woman, What is this that thou haſt done?* ver. 13. *And the woman ſaid,* nakedly declaring the thing as it was, *The ſerpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord ſaid unto the ſerpent,* to teſtify his utter abhorrence of ſin, by a laſting monument of his diſpleaſure, in puniſhing the creature that had been barely the inſtrument of it, *Thou art curſed above the cattle, and above every beaſt of the field — And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy ſeed and her ſeed: it ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel.* Thus in the midſt of judgment, hath God remembered mercy, from the beginning of the world! Connecting the

the grand promiſe of ſalvation, with the very ſentence of condemnation.

4. "Unto the woman he ſaid, I will greatly multiply thy ſorrow, (and, or in) thy conception, in ſorrow or pain, thou ſhalt bring forth children," yea, above any other creature under heaven: which original curſe we ſee, is intailed on her lateſt poſterity. "And thy deſire ſhall be to thy huſband, and he ſhall rule over thee." It ſeems, the latter part of this ſentence, is explanatory of the former. Was there till now any other inferiority of the woman to the man, than that which we may conceive in one angel to another? "And unto Adam he ſaid, Becauſe thou haſt hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and haſt eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt not eat of it; curſed is the ground for thy ſake.—Thorns and thiſtles ſhall it bring it forth unto thee;" uſeleſs, yea and hurtful productions: whereas nothing calculated to hurt or give pain, had at firſt any place in the creation. "And thou ſhalt eat of the herb of the field," coarſe and vile, compared to the delicious fruits of paradiſe. "In the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it waſt thou taken. For duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return."

II. 1. Let us now in the ſecond place, weigh theſe ſolemn words, in a more particular manner. "Duſt thou art." But how fearfully and wonderfully wrought, into innumerable fibres, nerves, membranes, muſcles, arteries, veins, veſſels of various kinds! And how amazingly is this duſt connected with *water*, with incloſed, circulating fluids, diverſified a thouſand ways, by a thouſand tubes

tubes and ſtrainers! Yea, and how wonderfully is air impacted into every part, ſolid, or fluid, of the animal machine! *Air* not elaſtic, which would tear the machine in pieces, but as fixed as water under the pole! But all this would not avail, were not ethereal *Fire* intimately mixed both with this Earth, Air, and Water. And all theſe elements are mingled together in the moſt exact proportion: ſo that while the body is in health, no one of them predominates in the leaſt degree over the others.

2. Such was man with regard to his corporeal part, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. But ſince he ſinned, he is not only duſt, but mortal, corruptible duſt. And by ſad experience we find, that this "corruptible body preſſes down the ſoul." It very frequently hinders the ſoul in its operations, and at beſt ſerves it very imperfectly. Yet the ſoul cannot diſpenſe with its ſervice, imperfect as it is. For an imbodied ſpirit cannot form one thought, but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking, is not, (as many ſuppoſe,) the act of a pure ſpirit: but the act of a ſpirit connected with a body, and playing upon a ſet of material keys. It cannot poſſibly therefore make any better muſic, than the nature and ſtate of its inſtruments allow it. Hence every diſorder of the body, eſpecially of the parts more immediately ſubſervient to thinking, lay an almoſt inſuperable bar, in the way of its thinking juſtly. Hence the maxim received in all ages, *Humanum eſt errare & neſcire.* Not ignorance alone (that belongs more or leſs to every *creature* in heaven and earth: ſeeing none is omniſcient, none knoweth all things, ſave the *Creator*) but error is intailed on every

child of man. Miſtake as well as ignorance, is in our preſent ſtate, inſeparable from humanity. Every child of man is in a thouſand miſtakes, and is liable to freſh miſtakes every moment. And a miſtake in judgment may occaſion a miſtake in practice, yea, naturally leads thereto. I miſtake, and poſſibly cannot avoid miſtaking, the character of this or that man. I ſuppoſe him to be what he is not; to be better or worſe than he really is. Upon this wrong ſuppoſition I behave wrong to him, that is, more or leſs affectionately than he deſerves. And by the miſtake which is occaſioned by the defect of my bodily organs, I am naturally led ſo to do. Such is the preſent condition of human nature: of a mind dependent on a mortal body. Such is the ſtate entailed on all human ſpirits, while connected with fleſh and blood!

3. "And unto duſt thou ſhalt return." How admirably well has the wiſe Creator ſecured the execution of this ſentence on all the offſpring of Adam! It is true, He was pleaſed to make one exception, from this general rule, in a very early age of the world, in favour of an eminently righteous man. So we read (Gen. v. 23, 24,) After Enoch had "walked with God, three hundred, ſixty and five years, he was not: for God took him." He exempted him from the ſentence paſſed upon all fleſh, and took him alive into heaven. Many ages after he was pleaſed to make a ſecond exception; ordering the prophet Elijah to be taken up into heaven, in a chariot of fire: very probably by a convoy of angels, aſſuming that appearance. And it is not unlikely, that he ſaw good to make a third exception, in the perſon of the beloved diſciple. There is tranſ-

mitted to us a particular account of the Apoſtle John's old age. But we have not any account of his death, and not the leaſt intimation concerning it. Hence we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that he did not die, but that after he had finiſhed his courſe, and "walked with God" for about a hundred years, "the Lord took him," as he did *Enoch:* not in ſo open and conſpicuous a manner, as he did the prophet Elijah.

4. But ſetting theſe rare or three inſtances aſide, who has been able in the courſe of near ſix thouſand years, to evade the execution of this ſentence, paſſed on Adam and all his poſterity? Be men ever ſo great maſters of the art of healing, can they prevent or heal the gradual decays of nature? Can all their boaſted ſkill heal old age, or hinder duſt from returning to duſt? Nay, who among the greateſt maſters of medicine has been able to add a century to his own years? Yea, or to protract his own life any conſiderable ſpace beyond the common period? The days of man, for above three thouſand years, from the time of Moſes at leaſt, have been fixed, by a middling computation, at threeſcore years and ten How few are there that attain to fourſcore years? Perhaps hardly one in five hundred. So little does the art of man avail againſt the appointment of God!

5. God has indeed provided for the execution of his own decree, in the very principles of our nature. It is well known, the human body when it comes into the world, conſiſts of innumerable membranes exquiſitely thin, that are filled with circulating fluids, to which the ſolid parts bear a very ſmall proportion. Into the tubes, compoſed of theſe membranes, nouriſhment muſt be

be continually infuſed: otherwiſe life cannot continue, but will come to an end almoſt as ſoon as it is begun. And ſuppoſe this nouriſhment to be liquid, which as it flows through thoſe fine canals, continually enlarges them in all their dimenſions, yet it contains innumerable ſolid particles, which continually adhere to the inner ſurface of the veſſels through which they flow: ſo that in the ſame proportion as any veſſel is enlarged, it is ſtiffened alſo. Thus the body grows firmer, as it grows larger, from infancy to manhood. In twenty, five and twenty, or thirty years, it attains its full meaſure of firmneſs. Every part of the body is then ſtiffened to its full degree: as much earth adhering to all the veſſels, as gives the ſolidity they ſeverally need to the nerves, arteries, veins, muſcles, in order to exerciſe their functions in the moſt perfect manner. For twenty, or it may be, thirty years following, although more and more particles of earth, continually adhere to the inner ſurface of every veſſel in the body, yet the ſtiffneſs cauſed thereby is hardly obſervable, and occaſions little inconvenience. But after ſixty years, (more or leſs, according to the natural conſtitution, and a thouſand accidental circumſtances) the change is eaſily perceived, even at the ſurface of the body. Wrinkles ſhew the proportion of the fluids to be leſſened, as does alſo the dryneſs of the ſkin, through a diminution of the blood and juices which before moiſtened, and kept it ſmooth and ſoft. The extremities of the body grow cold, not only as they are remote from the centre of motion, but as the ſmaller veſſels are filled up, and can no longer admit the circulating fluid. As age increaſes, fewer and fewer of the veſſels

are pervious, and capable of tranſmitting the vital ſtream: except the larger ones, moſt of which are lodged within the trunk of the body. In extreme old age, the arteries themſelves, the grand inſtruments of circulation, by the continual appoſition of earth, become hard and as it were bony, till having loſt the power of contracting themſelves, they can no longer propel the blood, even through the largeſt channels, in conſequence of which, death naturally enſues. Thus are the ſeeds of death ſown in our very nature! Thus from the very hour when we firſt appear on the ſtage of life, we are travelling toward death: we are preparing, whether we will or no, to return to the duſt from whence we came!

6. Let us now take a ſhort review of the whole, as it is delivered with inimitable ſimplicity, what an unprejudiced perſon might even from hence infer to be the word of God. In that period of duration which he ſaw to be moſt proper, (of which he alone could be the judge, whoſe eye views the whole poſſibility of things from everlaſting to everlaſting) the Almighty, riſing in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, went forth to create the univerſe. "In the beginning he created," made out of nothing, "the matter of the heavens and the earth." (So Mr. Hutchinſon obſerves, the original words properly ſignify.) Then "the ſpirit or breath from the Lord," that is the air "moved upon the face of the waters." Here were earth, water, air, three of the elements, or component parts of the lower world. "And God ſaid, Let there be light: and there was light." By his omnific word, light, that is, fire, the fourth element ſprang into being. Out of theſe variouſly modified and proportioned to each

each other, He compoſed the whole. "The earth brought forth graſs, and herb yielding ſeed, and the tree yielding fruit after its kind:" and then the various tribes of animals, to inhabit the waters, the air, and the earth. But the very heathen could obſerve,

Sanctius his animal mentiſq; capacius altæ Deerat Adhuc!———

There was ſtill wanting a creature of a higher rank, capable of wiſdom and holineſs. *Natus homo eſt. So God created man in the image of God, in the image of God created he him!* Mark the emphatical repetition! God did not make him mere matter, a piece of ſenſeleſs, unintelligent clay: but a ſpirit, like himſelf, (although clothed with a material vehicle.) As ſuch, he was endued with underſtanding, with a will, including various affections, and with liberty, a power of uſing them in a right or wrong manner, of chuſing good or evil. Otherwiſe neither his underſtanding nor his will would have been to any purpoſe; for he muſt have been as incapable of virtue or holineſs, as the ſtock of a tree. Adam in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. He choſe to do his own will rather than the will of his Creator. He *was not deceived*, but knowingly and deliberately rebelled againſt his Father and his King. In that moment he loſt the moral image of God, and in part, the natural. He commenced, unholy, fooliſh, and unhappy. And *in Adam all died.* He entitled all his poſterity, to error, guilt, ſorrow, fear; pain, diſeaſes, and death.

7. How exactly does matter of fact, do all things round us, even the face of the whole world agree with this account? Open your eyes! Look round you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms: see consciousness of guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery, the daughter of sin. See on every side sickness and pain, inhabitants of every nation under heaven, driving on the poor helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death! So they have done, well-nigh from the beginning of the world. So they will do, till the consummation of all things.

8. But can the Creator despise the work of his own hands? Surely that is impossible? Hath he not then, seeing he alone is able, provided a remedy for all these evils? Yea, verily he hath! And a sufficient remedy, every way adequate to the disease. He hath fulfilled his word: he hath given "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish but have everlasting life." Here is a remedy provided for all our guilt: he "bore all our sins in his body on the tree." And "if any one have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And here is a remedy for all our disease, all the corruption of our nature. For *God hath also*, through the intercession of his Son, *given us his Holy Spirit*, To *renew* us both *in knowledge*, in his natural image, *opening the eyes of our understanding, and enlightening* us with all such knowledge as is requisite to our pleasing God: and also in his moral image namely, *righ-*

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teouſneſs and true holineſs. And ſuppoſing this is done, we know that *all things will work together for our good.* We know, by happy experience, that all natural evils change their nature and turn to good: that ſorrow, ſickneſs, pain, will all prove medicines, to heal our ſpiritual ſickneſs. They will all be *to our profit;* will all tend to our unſpeakable advantage: making us more largely *partakers of his holineſs*, while we remain on earth, adding ſo many ſtars to that crown, which is reſerved in heaven for us.

9. Behold then both the juſtice and mercy of God! His juſtice in puniſhing ſin, the ſin of him in whoſe loins we were then all contained, on Adam and his whole poſterity! And his mercy, in providing an univerſal remedy for an univerſal evil! In appointing the ſecond Adam to die for all, who had died in the firſt: that "as in Adam all died, ſo in Chriſt all might be made alive:" that "as by one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, ſo by the righteouſneſs of one," the free gift "might come upon all, unto juſtification of life." Juſtification of life, as being connected with the New Birth, the beginning of ſpiritual life, which leads us through the life of holineſs, to life eternal, to glory.

10. And it ſhould be particularly obſerved, that "where ſin abounded, grace does much more abound." For "not as the condemnation, ſo is the free gift," but we may gain infinitely more than we have loſt. We may now attain both higher degrees of holineſs, and higher degrees of glory, than it would have been poſſible for us to attain, if Adam had not ſinned, the Son of God had not died. Conſequently that amazing in-

ſtance

ſtance of the love of God to man had never exiſted, which has in all ages excited the higheſt joy, and love, and gratitude from his children. We might have loved God the Creator: God the Preſerver, God the Governor. But there would have been no place for love to God the Redeemer: this could have had no being. The higheſt glory and joy, of ſaints on earth and ſaints in heaven, Chriſt crucified, had been wanting. We could not then have praiſed him, that "thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet emptied himſelf, took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs?" This is now the nobleſt theme of all the children of God on earth. Yea, we need not ſcruple to affirm, even of angels; and archangels, and all the company of heaven,

Hallelujah they cry
To the King of the ſky,
To the great, everlaſting I AM,
To the Lamb that was ſlain,
And liveth again,
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb.

SERMON

SERMON LIX.

ON PREDESTINATION.

ROMANS viii. 29, 30.

Whom he did foreknow, he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son:——whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called: whom he called them he juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified.

1. "OUR beloved brother Paul," ſays St. Peter,* "according to the wiſdom given to him, hath written unto you: as alſo in all his epiſtles, ſpeaking in ſome of theſe things: in which are ſome things hard to be underſtood; which they that are unlearned and unſtable, wreſt as they do alſo the other ſcriptures, to their own deſtruction."

2. It is not improbable, that among thoſe things ſpoken by St. Paul, which are *hard to be underſtood*, the apoſtle Peter might place what he ſpeaks on this ſubject, in the eighth and ninth chapters

* 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

chapters of his epiſtles to the *Romans*. And it is certain, not only *the unlearned*, but many of the moſt learned men in the world, and not *the unſtable* only, but many who ſeemed to be well eſtabliſhed in the truths of the goſpel, have for ſeveral centuries *wreſted* theſe paſſages *to their own deſtruction*.

3. *Hard to be underſtood* we may well allow them to be, when we conſider, how men of the ſtrongeſt underſtanding, improved by all the advantages of education, have continually differed in judgment concerning them. And this very conſideration, that there is ſo wide a difference upon the head, between men of the greateſt learning, ſenſe and piety, one might imagine would make all who now ſpeak upon the ſubject, exceedingly wary and ſelf-diffident. But I know not how it is, that juſt the reverſe is obſerved, in every part of the chriſtian world. No writers upon earth appear more poſitive, than thoſe who write on this difficult ſubject. Nay, the ſame men, who writing on any other ſubject, are remarkably modeſt and humble, on this alone lay aſide all ſelf-diſtruſt.

"And ſpeak *ex cathedra* infallible."

This is peculiarly obſervable of almoſt all thoſe, who aſſert the abſolute decrees. But ſurely, it is poſſible to avoid this: whatever we propoſe, may be propoſed with modeſty, and with deference to thoſe wiſe and good men, who are of a contrary opinion. And the rather, becauſe ſo much has been ſaid already, on every part of the queſtion, ſo many volumes have been written, that it is ſcarce poſſible to ſay any thing which has not been ſaid before. All I would offer, at preſent, not to the

the lovers of contention, but to men of piety and candour, are a few ſhort hints, which perhaps may caſt ſome light, on the text above recited.

4. The more frequently and carefully I have conſidered it, the more I have been inclined to think, that the apoſtle is not here (as many have ſuppoſed) deſcribing a chain of cauſes and effects; (this does not ſeem to have entered into his heart:) but ſimply ſhewing *the method in which God works; the order* in which the ſeveral branches of ſalvation, conſtantly follow each other. And this, I apprehend, will be clear to any ſerious and impartial enquirer, ſurveying the work of God either forward or backward: either from the beginning to the end, or from the end to the beginning.

5. And firſt, let us look forward on the whole work of God in the ſalvation of man, conſidering it from the beginning, the firſt point, till it terminates in glory. The firſt point is, The foreknowledge of God. God *foreknew* thoſe in every nation, who would believe, from the beginning of the world, to the conſummation of all things. But in order to throw light upon this dark queſtion, it ſhould be well obſerved, that when we ſpeak of God's *foreknowledge*, we do not ſpeak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For if we ſpeak properly, there is no ſuch thing, as either *fore-knowledge* or *after-knowledge* in God. All time, or rather all eternity (for time is only that ſmall fragment of eternity, which is allowed to the children of men) being preſent to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another: but ſees all things in one point of view, from everlaſting to everlaſting. As all time, with every thing that exiſts therein, is preſent with him at once,

once, so he sees at once, whatever was, is, or will be to the end of time. But observe. We must not think, they *are*, because he *knows* them. No. He knows them, because they are. Just as I (if one may be allowed to compare the things of men with the deep things of God) now know, the sun shines. Yet the sun does not shine, because I know it: but I know it, because he shines. My knowledge *supposes* the sun to shine; but does not in any wise *cause* it. In like manner, God knows, that man sins; for he knows all things. Yet we do not sin, because he knows it: but he knows it, because we sin. And his knowledge *supposes* our sin, but does not in any wise *cause* it. In a word, God looking on all ages from the creation to the consummation as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in no wise caused by his knowledge. Men are as *free* in believing, or not believing, as if he did not know it at all.

6. Indeed if man were not free, he could not be accountable, either for his thoughts, words or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable, either of reward or punishment. He would be incapable either of virtue or vice, or being either morally good or bad. If he had no more freedom than the sun, the moon, or the stars, he would be no more accountable than them. On supposition that he had no more freedom than them, the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward, and as liable to punishment as man: one would be as accountable as the other. Yea, and it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue

virtue or vice to him, as to aſcribe it to the ſtock of a tree.

7. But to proceed. *Whom he did foreknow, them he did predeſtinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son.* This is the ſecond ſtep, (to ſpeak after the manner of men: for in fact, there is nothing *before* or *after* in God.) In other words, God decrees, from everlaſting to everlaſting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, ſhall be conformed to his image, ſhall be ſaved from all inward and outward ſin, into all inward and outward holineſs. Accordingly it is a plain, undeniable fact; all who truly believe in the name of the Son of God, do now *receive the end of their faith, the ſalvation of their ſouls:* and this in virtue of the unchangeable, irreverſible, irreſiſtible decree of God, *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved; he that believeth not ſhall be damned.*

8. *Whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called.* This is the third ſtep: (ſtill remembering, that we ſpeak after the manner of men.) To expreſs it a little more largely. According to his fixt decree, that believers ſhall be ſaved, thoſe whom he foreknows as ſuch, he calls both outwardly and inwardly: outwardly by the word of his grace, and inwardly by his Spirit. This inward application of his word to the heart, ſeems to be what ſome term *effectual calling.* And it implies, the calling them children of God, the *accepting* them *in the Beloved;* the juſtifying them *freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.*

9. *Whom he called, thoſe he juſtified.* This is the fourth ſtep. It is generally allowed, that the word *juſtified* here is taken in a peculiar ſenſe; that it means, it made them juſt or righteous. He executed his decree, *conforming them to the*

image of his Son, or (as we uſually ſpeak) *ſanctified them.*

10. It remains, *whom he juſtified, thoſe he glorified.* This is the laſt ſtep. Having made them *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light*, he gives them *the kingdom which was prepared for them before the world began.* This is the order wherein, *according to the counſel of his will* [the plan he has laid down from eternity] he ſaves thoſe whom he foreknew, the true believers in every place and generation.

11. The ſame great work of ſalvation by faith, according to the foreknowledge and decree of God, may appear in a ſtill clearer light, if we view it backward, from the end to the beginning. Suppoſe then you ſtood with the *great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people*, who *give praiſe unto him that ſitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever:* you would not find one among them all, that were entered into glory, who was not a witneſs of that great truth, *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* not one of all that innumerable company, who was not *ſanctified*, before he was *glorified.* By holineſs he was prepared for glory, according to the invariable will of the Lord, that the crown purchaſed by the blood of his Son, ſhould be given to none but thoſe who are renewed by his Spirit. He is become *the author of eternal ſalvation* only *to them that obey him:* that obey him inwardly and outwardly; that are holy in heart, and holy in all manner of converſation.

12. And could you take a view of all thoſe upon earth, who are now *ſanctified*, you would find, not one of theſe had been ſanctified, 'till

after

after he was *called*. He was firſt called, not only with an outward call, by the word and the meſſengers of God, but likewiſe with an inward call, by his Spirit applying his word, enabling him to believe in the only begotten Son of God, and bearing teſtimony with his ſpirit, that he was a child of God. And it was by this very means they were all ſanctified. It was by a ſenſe of the love of God ſhed abroad in his heart, that every one of them was enabled to love God. Loving God, he loved his neighbour as himſelf, and had power to walk in all his commandments blameleſs. This is a rule which admits of no exception. God *calls* a ſinner his own, that is, juſtifies him, before he ſanctifies. And by this very thing, the conſciouſneſs of his favour, he works in him that grateful, filial affection, from which ſpring every good temper, and word, and work.

13. And who are they that are thus *called* of God, but thoſe whom he had before *predeſtinated*, or decreed to *conform to the image of his Son?* This decree (ſtill ſpeaking after the manner of men) precedes every man's calling. Every believer was predeſtinated, before he was called. For God calls none, but *according to the counſel of his will*, according to this προθεσις, or plan of acting, which he had laid down before the foundation of the world.

14. Once more. As all that are called were predeſtinated, ſo all whom God has predeſtinated he *foreknew*. He knew, he ſaw them as believers, and as ſuch predeſtinated them to ſalvation, according to his eternal decree, *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved*. Thus we ſee the whole proceſs of the work of God, from the end to the beginning. Who are glorified? None but thoſe who were

firſt ſanctified. Who are ſanctified? None but thoſe who were firſt juſtified. Who are juſtified? None but thoſe who were firſt predeſtinated. Who are predeſtinated? None but thoſe whom God foreknew as believers. Thus the purpoſe and work of God ſtands unſhaken as the pillars of heaven, "He that believeth ſhall be ſaved: he that believeth not ſhall be damned." And thus God is clear from the blood of all men; ſince whoever periſhes, periſhes by his own act and deed. *They will not come unto me*, ſays the Saviour of men: and *there is no ſalvation in any other*. They *will not believe*; and there is no other way either to preſent or eternal ſalvation. Therefore their blood is upon their own head: and God is ſtill *juſtified in his ſaying*, that he "willeth all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of his truth."

15. The ſum of all is this. The Almighty all-wiſe God, ſees and knows from everlaſting to everlaſting, all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal now. With him nothing is either paſt or future, but all things equally preſent. He has therefore, if we ſpeak according to the truth of things, no fore-knowledge, no after-knowledge. This would be ill-conſiſtent with the apoſtle's words, "With him is no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning:" and with the account he gives of himſelf by the prophet, *I the Lord change not*. Yet when he ſpeaks to us, knowing whereof we are made, knowing the ſcantineſs of our underſtanding, he lets himſelf down to our capacity, and ſpeaks of himſelf after the manner of men. Thus in condeſcention to our weakneſs, he ſpeaks of his own *purpoſe*, *counſel*, *plan*, *fore-knowledge*. Not that God has any need

need of *counsel*, of *purpose*, or of *planning* his work before hand. Far be it from us, to impute these to the Most High; to measure him by ourselves! It is merely in compassion to us, that he speaks thus of himself as *fore-knowing* the things in heaven or earth, and as *predestinating* or *fore-ordaining* them. But can we possibly imagine, that these expressions are to be taken literally? To one who was so gross in his conceptions, might he not say, "Thinkest thou I am such an one as thyself?" Not so. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than thy ways." I know, decree, work in such a manner, as it is not possible for thee to conceive. But to give thee some faint, glimmering knowledge of my ways, I use the language of men, and suit myself to thy apprehensions, in this thy infant state of existence.

16. What is it then that we learn from this whole account? It is this and no more. 1. God knows all believers, 2. Wills that they should be saved from sin, 3. To that end justifies them, 4. Sanctifies, and 5. Takes them to glory.

O that men would praise the Lord for this his goodness! And that they would be content with this plain account of it, and not endeavour to wade into those mysteries, which are too deep for angels to fathom!

SERMON LX.

GOD's LOVE TO FALLEN MAN.

ROMANS v. 15.

Not as the tranſgreſſion, ſo is the free gift.

1. HOW exceeding common, and how bitter is the outcry againſt our firſt Parent, for the miſchief which he not only brought upon himſelf, but entailed upon his lateſt poſterity? It was by his wilful rebellion againſt God, *That ſin entered into the world. By one man's diſobedience*, as the Apoſtle obſerves, *the many οἱ πολλοὶ*, as many as were then in the loins of their forefathers, *were made*, or conſtituted *ſinners*: not only deprived of the favour of God, but alſo of his image; of all virtue, righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and ſunk partly into the image of the devil, in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers, partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal paſſions and grovelling appetites. Hence alſo death entered into the world,

world, with all his forerunners and attendants, pain, ſickneſs, and a whole train of uneaſy, as well as unholy paſſions and tempers.

2. "For all this we may thank Adam," has echoed down from generation to generation. The ſelf-ſame charge has been repeated in every age, and every nation, where the Oracles of God are known, in which alone this grand and important event, has been diſcovered to the children of men. Has not *your* heart, and probably your lips too, joined in the general charge? How few are there of thoſe who believe the ſcriptural relation of the fall of man, that have not entertained the ſame thought concerning our firſt parent? Severely condemning him, that through wilful diſobedience to the ſole command of his Creator,

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

3. Nay, it were well if the charge reſted here: but it is certain, it does not. It cannot be denied, that it frequently glances from Adam to his Creator. Have not thouſands, even of thoſe that are called Chriſtians, taken the liberty to call his mercy, if not his juſtice alſo into queſtion, on this very account? Some indeed have done this, a little more modeſtly, in an oblique and indirect manner. But others have thrown aſide the maſk and aſked, "Did not God foreſee, that Adam would abuſe his liberty? And did he not know the baneful conſequences which this muſt naturally have, on all his poſterity? And why then did he permit that diſobedience? Was it not eaſy for the Almighty to have prevented it?" He certainly did foreſee the whole.

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This cannot be denied. For *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* (Rather, from all eternity, as the words απ' αιωνος properly signify.) And it was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it: for he hath all power both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him at the same time, that it was best upon the whole, not to prevent it. He knew, that *not as the transgression, so the free gift:* that the evil resulting from the former, was not as the good resulting from the latter, not worthy to be compared with it. He saw that to permit the fall of the first man, was far best for mankind in general: that abundantly more good than evil would accrue to the posterity of Adam by his fall: that if *sin abounded* thereby over all the earth, yet grace *would much more abound:* yea, and that to every individual of the human race, unless it was his own choice.

4. It is exceeding strange that hardly any thing has been written, or at least published on this subject: nay, that it has been so little weighed or understood, by the generality of Christians: especially considering that it is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a truth of the deepest importance; it being impossible on any other principle,

> "To assert a gracious Providence,
> And justify the ways of God with men:"

And considering withal, how plain this important truth is, to all sensible and candid inquirers. May the Lover of men open the eyes of our understanding to perceive clearly, that by the

the fall of Adam mankind in general have gained a capacity,

Firſt, of being more holy and happy on earth, and

Secondly, of being more happy in heaven, than otherwiſe they could have been.

1. And, firſt, mankind in general have gained by the fall of Adam, a capacity of obtaining more holineſs and happineſs on earth, than it would have been poſſible for them to attain, if Adam had not fallen. For if Adam had not fallen, Chriſt had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this: nothing more undeniable: the more thoroughly we conſider the point, the more deeply ſhall we be convinced of it. Unleſs all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not ſee, that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? *By one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin. And thus death paſſed upon all*, through him, *in whom all men ſinned*, Rom. v. 12. Was it not to remedy this very thing, that *the word was made fleſh?* that *as in Adam all died, ſo in Chriſt all might be made alive?* Unleſs then *many* had been made ſinners by the diſobedience of one, by the obedience of one *many* would not have been *made righteous*, ver. 18. So there would have been no room for that amazing diſplay of the Son of God's love to mankind. There would have been no occaſion for his *being obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs.* It could not then have been ſaid, to the aſtoniſhment of all the hoſts of heaven, *God ſo loved the world*, yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or deſire

desire of returning to him, *that he gave his Son* out of his bosom, his only begotten Son, *to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Neither could we then have said, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself:* or that he *made him to be sin,* (that is, a sin-offering) *for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him.* There would have been no such occasion for such *an Advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous:* neither for his appearing *at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us.*

2. What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this, there could then have been no such thing as faith in God *thus loving the world,* giving his only Son for us men and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, *as loving us and giving himself for us.* There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness. Indeed the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ: neither could Christ have been *made of God unto us, either wisdom, righteousness, sanctification* or *redemption.*

3. And the same grand blank which was in our faith, must likewise have been in our love. We might have loved the Author of our being, the Father of angels and men, as our Creator and Preserver: we might have said, *O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.* But we could not have loved him under the nearest and dearest relation, as *delivering up his*

Son

Son for us all. We might have loved the Son of God, as being *the brightneſs of his Father's glory, the expreſs image of his perſon:* (although this ground ſeems to belong rather to the inhabitants of heaven than earth.) But we could not have loved him, as *bearing our ſins in his own body on the tree,* and "by that one oblation of himſelf once offered, making a full oblation, ſacrifice and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world." We could not have been *made conformable to his death,* nor have *known the power of his reſurrection.* We could not have loved the Holy Ghoſt, as revealing to us the Father and the Son, as opening the eyes of our underſtanding, bringing us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light, renewing the image of God in our ſoul, and ſealing us unto the day of redemption. So that in truth, what is now *in the ſight of God, even the Father,* not of fallible men, *pure religion and undefiled,* would then have had no being: inaſmuch as it wholly depends on thoſe grand principles. *By grace ye are ſaved through faith: and Jeſus Chriſt is of God made unto us wiſdom and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification and redemption.*

4. We ſee then what unſpeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our firſt parent, with regard to faith: faith both in God the Father, who ſpared not his own Son, his only Son, but *wounded him for our tranſgreſſions,* and *bruiſed him for our iniquities:* and in God, the Son, who poured out his ſoul for us tranſgreſſors, and waſhed us in his own blood. We ſee what advantage we derive therefrom, with regard to the love of God, both of God the Father and God the Son. The chief ground of this love, as long as we remain in the body, is plainly declared by the Apoſtle,

Apoſtle, *We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us.* But the greateſt inſtance of his love had never been given, if Adam had not fallen.

5. And as our faith both in God the Father and the Son, receives an unſpeakable increaſe, if not its very being from this grand event, as does alſo our love both of the Father and the Son; ſo does the love of our neighbour alſo, our benevolence to all mankind: which cannot but increaſe in the ſame proportion with our faith and love of God. For who does not apprehend the force of that inference drawn by the loving Apoſtle, *Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another.* If God *ſo* loved us—obſerve, the ſtreſs of the argument lies on this very point: *ſo loved us!* as to deliver up his only Son, to die a curſed death for our ſalvation. *Beloved, what manner of love is this*, wherewith God had loved us? So as to give his *only Son!* In glory equal with the Father; in majeſty coeternal! What manner of love is this, wherewith the only begotten Son of God hath loved us! as to *empty himſelf*, as far as poſſible, of his eternal Godhead! as to diveſt himſelf of that glory, which he had with the Father before the world began! as to "take upon him the form of a ſervant, being found in faſhion as a man!" And then to humble himſelf ſtill farther, "being obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs!" If God *ſo* loved us, how ought we to love one another? But this motive to brotherly love had been totally wanting, if Adam had not fallen. Conſequently we could not then have loved one another in ſo high a degree, as we may now. Nor could there have been that height and

and depth in the command of our bleſſed Lord, "As I have loved you, ſo love one another."

6. Such gainers may we be by Adam's fall, with regard both to the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is another grand point, which though little adverted to, deſerves our deepeſt conſideration. By that one act of our firſt parent, not only *ſin entered into the world*, but pain alſo, and was alike intailed on his whole poſterity. And herein appeared, not only the juſtice, but the unſpeakable goodneſs of God! For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! How much holineſs and happineſs out of pain!

7. How innumerable are the benefits which God conveys to the children of men through the channel of ſufferings? So that it might well be ſaid, "What are termed afflictions in the language of men, are in the language of God ſtyled bleſſings." Indeed had there been no ſuffering in the world, a conſiderable part of religion, yea, and in ſome reſpects, the moſt excellent part, could have had no place therein: ſince the very exiſtence of it depends on our ſuffering; ſo that had there been no pain, it could have had no being. Upon this foundation, even our ſuffering, it is evident all our paſſive graces are built: yea, the nobleſt of all chriſtian graces, love *enduring all things*. Here is the ground for reſignation to God, enabling us to ſay from the heart, in every trying hour, "It is the Lord: let him do what ſeemeth him good. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and ſhall we not receive evil?" And what a glorious ſpectacle is this? Did it not conſtrain even a heathen to cry out, "*Ecce ſpectaculum Deo dignum!* See a ſight

worthy of God. A good man ſtruggling with adverſity and ſuperior to it." Here is the ground for confidence in God, both with regard to what we feel, and with regard to what we ſhould fear, were it not that our ſoul is calmly ſtayed on him. What room could there be for truſt in God, if there was no ſuch thing as pain or danger? Who might not ſay then, "The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" It is by ſufferings that our faith is tried, and therefore made more acceptable to God. It is in the day of trouble that we have occaſion to ſay, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him." And this is well pleaſing to God, that we ſhould own him in the face of danger; in defiance of ſorrow, ſickneſs, pain or death.

8. Again. Had there been neither natural nor moral evil in the world, what muſt have become of patience, meekneſs, gentleneſs, long-ſuffering? It is manifeſt they could have had no being; ſeeing all theſe have evil for their object. If therefore evil had never entered into the world, neither could theſe have had any place in it. For who could have *returned good for evil*, had there been no evil-doer in the univerſe? How had it been poſſible, on that ſuppoſition, to *overcome evil with good?* Will you ſay, "But all theſe graces might have been divinely infuſed into the hearts of men." Undoubtedly they might: but if they had, there would have been no uſe or exerciſe for them. Whereas in the preſent ſtate of things, we can never long want occaſion to exerciſe them. And the more they are exerciſed, the more all our graces are ſtrengthened and increaſed. And in the ſame proportion as our

our reſignation, our confidence in God, our patience and fortitude, our meekneſs, gentleneſs, and long-ſuffering, together with our faith and love of God and man increaſe, muſt our happineſs increaſe, even in the preſent world.

9. Yet again. As God's permiſſion of Adam's fall gave all his poſterity a thouſand opportunities of *ſuffering*, and thereby of exerciſing all thoſe paſſive graces, which increaſe both their holineſs and happineſs: ſo it gives them opportunities of *doing good* in numberleſs inſtances, of exerciſing themſelves in various good works, which otherwiſe could have had no being. And that exertions of benevolence, of compaſſion, of godlike mercy, had then been totally prevented! Who could then have ſaid to the lover of men,

" Thy mind throughout my life be ſhewn,
While liſtening to the wretches cry,
The widow's or the orphan's groan,
On mercy's wings I ſwiftly fly,
The poor and needy to relieve;
Myſelf, my all for them to give?"

It is the juſt obſervation of a benevolent man,

" All worldly joys go leſs,
Than that one joy of doing kindneſſes."

Surely *in keeping* this commandment, if no other, *there is great reward. As we have time, let us do good unto all men*; good of every kind, and in every degree. Accordingly the more good we do (other circumſtances being equal,) the happier we ſhall be. The more we deal our bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with garments, the more we relieve the ſtranger, and viſit them that are ſick or in priſon; the more kind

offices we do to those that groan under the various evils of human life: the more comfort we receive even in the present world; greater the recompense we have in our own bosom.

10. To sum up what has been said under this head. As the more holy we are upon earth, the more happy we must be, (seeing there is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness;) as the more good we do to others, the more of present reward redounds into our own bosom: even as our sufferings for God lead us to *rejoice* in him, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Therefore the fall of Adam, first by giving us an opportunity of being far more holy; secondly, by giving us the occasions of doing innumerable good works, which otherwise could not have been done; and thirdly, by putting it into our power to suffer for God, whereby "the spirit of glory and of God rests upon us:" may be of such advantage to the children of men, even in the present life, as they will not thoroughly comprehend, till they attain life everlasting.

11. It is then we shall be enabled fully to comprehend, not only the advantages, which accrue at the present time to the sons of men, by the fall of their first parent, but the infinitely greater advantages, which they may reap from it in eternity. In order to form some conception of this, we may remember the observation of the Apostle, "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." The most glorious stars will undoubtedly be those, who are the most holy; who bear most of that image of God wherein they were created. The next in glory to these will be those who have been most abundant

dant in good works: and next to them, thoſe that have ſuffered moſt, according to the will of God. But what advantages in every one of theſe reſpects, will the children of God receive in heaven, by God's permitting the introduction of pain upon earth, in conſequence of ſin? By occaſion of this, they attained many holy tempers, which otherwiſe could have had no being: reſignation to God, confidence in him in times of trouble and danger, patience, meekneſs, gentleneſs, long-ſuffering, and the whole train of paſſive virtues. And on account of this ſuperior holineſs, they will then enjoy ſuperior happineſs. Again. Every one will then "receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Every individual will be "rewarded according to his work." But the fall gave riſe to innumerable good works, which could otherwiſe never have exiſted, ſuch as miniſtering to the neceſſities of ſaints, yea, relieving the diſtreſt in every kind. And hereby innumerable ſtars will be added to their eternal crown. Yet again. There will be an abundant reward in heaven, for *ſuffering*, as well as for *doing* the will of God: "theſe light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Therefore that event, which occaſioned the entrance of ſuffering into the world, has thereby occaſioned, to all the children of God, an increaſe of glory to all eternity. For although the ſufferings themſelves will be at an end; although

The pain of life ſhall then be o'er,
The anguiſh and diſtracting care;
The ſighing grief ſhall weep no more;
And ſin ſhall never enter there:

Yet the joys occaſioned thereby ſhall never end, but flow at God's right-hand for evermore.

12. There is one advantage more that we reap from Adam's fall, which is not unworthy our attention. Unleſs in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their firſt parent, every deſcendant of Adam, every child of man, muſt have perſonally anſwered for himſelf to God: it ſeems to be a neceſſary conſequence of this, that if he had once fallen, once violated any command of God, there would have been no poſſibility of his riſing again; there was no help, but he muſt have periſhed without remedy. For that covenant knew not to ſhew mercy: the word was, "The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die." Now who would not rather be on the footing he is now? Under a covenant of mercy? Who would wiſh to hazard a whole eternity upon one ſtake? Is it not infinitely more deſirable, to be in a ſtate wherein, though encompaſſed with infirmities, yet we do not run ſuch a deſperate riſk, but if we fall we may riſe again? Wherein we may ſay,

"My treſpaſs is grown up to heaven!
But, far above the ſkies,
In Chriſt abundantly forgiv'n,
I ſee thy mercies riſe!"

13. In Chriſt! Let me intreat every ſerious perſon, once more to fix his attention here. All that has been ſaid, all that can be ſaid on theſe ſubjects, centres in this point. The fall of Adam produced the death of Chriſt! Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! Yea,

Let earth and heaven agree,
Angels and men be join'd

To

To celebrate with me
The Saviour of mankind;
To' adore the all-atoning Lamb,
And bleſs the ſound of Jeſu's name!

If God had prevented the fall of man, *The word* had never been *made fleſh:* nor had we ever "ſeen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Thoſe myſteries never had been diſplayed, "which the very angels deſire to look into." Methinks this conſideration ſwallows up all the reſt, and ſhould never be out of our thoughts. Unleſs *by one man judgment had come upon all men to condemnation*, neither angels nor men could ever have known *the unſearchable riches of Chriſt*.

14. See then, upon the whole, how little reaſon we have to repine at the fall of our firſt parent, ſince herefrom we may derive ſuch unſpeakable advantages, both in time and eternity. See how ſmall pretence there is for queſtioning the mercy of God in permitting that event to take place! Since therein, mercy, by infinite degrees, rejoices over judgment! Where then is the man that preſumes to blame God, for not preventing Adam's ſin? Should we not rather bleſs him from the ground of the heart, for therein laying the grand ſcheme of man's redemption, and making way for that glorious manifeſtation of his wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice and mercy? If indeed God had decreed before the foundation of the world, that millions of men ſhould dwell in everlaſting burnings, becauſe Adam ſinned, hundreds or thouſands of years before they had a being; I know not who could thank him for this, unleſs the devil and his angels: ſeeing, on this ſuppoſition, all thoſe millions of unhappy ſpirits, would be plunged

plunged into hell by Adam's sin, without any possible advantage from it. But, blessed be God, this is not the case. Such a decree never existed. On the contrary, every one born of a woman, may be an unspeakable gainer thereby: and none ever was or can be a loser, but by his own choice.

15. We see here a full answer to that plausible account "of the origin of evil," published to the world some years since, and supposed to be unanswerable: "that it necessarily resulted from the nature of matter, which God was not able to alter." It is very kind in this sweet tongued orator to make an excuse for God! But there is really no occasion for it: God hath answered for himself. He made man in his own image, a spirit endued with understanding and liberty. Man abusing that liberty, produced evil; brought sin and pain into the world. This God permitted, in order to a fuller manifestation of his wisdom, justice and mercy, by bestowing on all who would receive it, an infinitely greater happiness, than they could possibly have attained, if Adam had not fallen.

16. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Although a thousand particulars of *his judgments, and of his ways, are unsearchable* to us, and *past* our *finding out*, yet may we discern the general scheme, running through time into eternity. *According to the counsel of his own will*, the plan he had laid before the foundation of the world, he created the parent of all mankind in his own image. And he permitted *all men* to be *made sinners, by the disobedience of* this *one* man, that *by the obedience of one*, all who receive *the free gift*, may be infinitely holier and happier to all eternity!

SERMON

SERMON LXI.

The Lord our Righteousness.

This is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.

1. How dreadful, and how innumerable are the contests, which have arisen about religion? And not only among the children of this world, among those who knew not what true religion was; but even among the children of God, those who had experienced *the kingdom of God within them*, who had tasted of *righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. How many of these in all ages, instead of joining together against the common enemy, have turned their weapons against each other, and so not only wasted their precious time, but hurt one another's spirits, weakened each other's hands, and so hindered the great work of their common Master! How many of the weak have hereby been offended?

offended? How many of the *lame turned out of the way?* How many sinners confirmed in their disregard of all religion, and their contempt of those that profess it? And how many of *the excellent ones upon earth* have been constrained to *weep in secret places?*

2. What would not every lover of God and his neighbour do, what would he not suffer to remedy this sore evil? To remove contention from the children of God? To restore or preserve peace among them? What but a good conscience would he think too dear to part with, in order to promote this valuable end? And suppose we cannot *make* these *wars to cease in all the world*, suppose we cannot reconcile the children of God to each other, however let each other do what he can, let him contribute if it be but two mites towards it. Happy are they who are able in any degree to promote *peace and good will among men!* Especially among good men; among those that are all listed under the banner of *the Prince of Peace:* and are therefore peculiarly engaged, *as much as lies in them*, to *live peaceably with all men.*

3. It would be a considerable step toward this glorious end, if we could bring good men to understand one another. Abundance of disputes arise purely from the want of this, from mere misapprehension. Frequently neither of the contending parties understands what his opponent means; whence it follows, that each violently attacks the other, while there is no real difference between them. And yet it is not always an easy matter, to convince them of this. Particularly when their passions are moved: it is then attended with the utmost difficulty. However

ever it is not impoſſible: eſpecially when we attempt it, not truſting in ourſelves, but having all our dependence upon him, with whom all things are poſſible. How ſoon is he able to diſperſe the cloud, to ſhine upon their hearts, and to enable them both to underſtand each other, and *the truth as it is in Jeſus!*

4. One very conſiderable article of this truth is contained in the words above recited. *This is his* name whereby he ſhall be called, *The Lord our righteouſneſs:* a truth this, which enters deep into the nature of chriſtianity, and in a manner ſupports the whole frame of it. Of this undoubtedly may be affirmed, what Luther affirms of a truth cloſely connected with it, it is *Articulus ſtantis vel cadentis eccleſiæ:* the chriſtian church ſtands or falls with it. It is certainly the pillar and ground of faith, of which alone cometh ſalvation: of that faith, which is found in all the children of God, and which "unleſs a man keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly."

5. Might not one therefore reaſonably expect, that however they differed in others, all thoſe who name the name of Chriſt, ſhould agree in this point? But how far is this from being the caſe? There is ſcarce any wherein they are ſo little agreed: wherein thoſe who all profeſs to follow Chriſt ſeem ſo widely and irreconcileably to differ. I ſay *ſeem;* becauſe I am thoroughly convinced, that many of them only ſeem to differ. The diſagreement is more in words than in ſentiments: they are much nearer in judgment than in language. And a wide difference in language there certainly is, not only between Proteſtants and Papiſts, but between Proteſtant and

and Proteſtant; yea, even between thoſe who all believe Juſtification by faith; who agree, as well in this, as every other fundamental doctrine of the goſpel.

6. But if the difference be more in *opinion* than real *experience*, and more in *expreſſion* than in *opinion*, how can it be, that even the children of God ſhould ſo vehemently contend with each other on the point? Several reaſons may be aſſigned for this: the chief is their not underſtanding one another; joined with too keen an attachment to their *opinions*, and particular modes of *expreſſion*.

In order to remove this, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, in order to our underſtanding one another on this head, I ſhall by the help of God endeavour to ſhew,

I. What is the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt;

II. When, and in what ſenſe, it is imputed to us:

And conclude with a ſhort and plain application.

And I. What is the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt? It is twofold, either his divine or his human righteouſneſs.

1. His divine righteouſneſs belongs to his divine nature, as he is ὁ ὤν *He that exiſteth, ever all*, God *bleſſed for ever*: the ſupreme, the eternal: "equal with the Father, as touching his godhead, though inferior to the Father as touching his manhood." Now this is his eternal, eſſential, immutable holineſs: his infinite mercy and truth: In all which *he and the Father are one*.

But I do not apprehend that the divine righteouſneſs of Chriſt, is immediately concerned in the preſent queſtion. I believe few, if any, do now contend, for the *imputation* of *this* righteouſneſs to us. Whoever believes the doctrine of

imputation,

imputation, understands it chiefly, if not solely of his human righteousness.

2. The *human righteousness* of Christ, belongs to him in his human nature; as he is *the Mediator between* God *and man, the man Christ Jesus.* This is either *internal* or *external.* His internal righteousness is the image of God, stampt on every power and faculty of his soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, so far as it can be imparted to an human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper: And all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.

3. It was the least part of his *external righteousness*, that he did nothing amiss: that he knew no outward sin of any kind, neither was *guile found in his mouth:* that he never spoke one improper word, nor did one improper action. Thus far it is only a *negative* righteousness, though such an one as never did, nor ever can belong to any one that is born of a woman, save himself alone. But even his outward righteousness was *positive* too. *He did all things well.* In every word of his tongue, in every work of his hands, he did precisely the *will of him that sent him.* In the whole course of his life, he did the will of God on earth as the angels do it in heaven. All he acted and spoke was exactly right in every circumstance. The whole and every part of his obedience was complete. *He fulfilled all righteousness.*

4. But his obedience implied more than all this: it implied not only doing, but suffering:

ſuffering the whole will of God, from the time he came into the world, till *he bore our ſins in his own body upon the tree:* yea, till having made a full atonement for them, *He* bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt. This is uſually termed the *paſſive* righteouſneſs of Chriſt, the former, his *active* righteouſneſs. But as the active and paſſive righteouſneſs of Chriſt were never in fact ſeparated from each other, ſo we never need ſeparate them at all either in ſpeaking or even in thinking. And it is with regard to both theſe conjointly, that Jeſus is called, *The Lord our righteouſneſs.*

II. But when is it, that any of us may truly ſay, *The Lord our righteouſneſs?* In other words, when is it that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is *imputed* to us, and in what ſenſe is it imputed?

1. Look through all the world, and all the men therein are either believers or unbelievers. The firſt thing then which admits of no diſpute among reaſonable men is this. To all believers the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed; to unbelievers it is not.

"But when is it imputed?" When they believe. In that very hour the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as ſoon as he believes: faith and the righteouſneſs of Chriſt are inſeparable. For if he believes according to ſcripture, he believes in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. There is no true faith, that is, juſtifying faith, which hath not the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for its object.

2. It is true, believers may not all ſpeak alike; they may not all uſe the ſame language. It is not to be expected that they ſhould: we cannot rea-

ſonably

ſonably require it of them. A thouſand circumſtances may cauſe them to vary from each other, in the manner of expreſſing themſelves. But a difference of expreſſion does not neceſſarily imply a difference of ſentiment. Different perſons may uſe different expreſſions, and yet mean the ſame thing Nothing is more common than this, although we ſeldom make ſufficient allowance for it. Nay, it is not eaſy for the ſame perſons, when they ſpeak of the ſame thing at a conſiderable diſtance of time, to uſe exactly the ſame expreſſions, even though they retain the ſame ſentiments. How then can we be rigorous, in requiring others, to uſe juſt the ſame expreſſions with us?

3. We may go a ſtep farther yet. Men may differ from us in their opinions as well as their expreſſions, and nevertheleſs be partakers with us, of the ſame precious faith. 'Tis poſſible they may not have a *diſtinct apprehenſion*, of the very bleſſing which they enjoy. Their *ideas* may not be ſo *clear*, and yet their experience may be as ſound as ours. There is a wide difference between the natural faculties of men, their underſtandings in particular. And that difference is exceedingly increaſed, by the manner of their education. Indeed this alone may occaſion an inconceivable difference, in their opinions of various kinds. And why not, upon this head, as well as on any other? But ſtill, though their opinions as well as expreſſions, may be confuſed and inaccurate, their hearts may cleave to God through the Son of his love, and be truly intereſted in his righteouſneſs.

4. Let us then make all that allowance to others, which were we in their place, we would

desire for ourselves. Who is ignorant (to touch again on that circumstance only) of the amazing power of education? And who that knows it, can expect, suppose, a member of the Church of *Rome*, either to think or speak clearly on this subject? And yet if we had heard even dying *Bellarmine* cry out, when he was asked, "Unto which of the saints wilt thou turn?" "*Fidere meritis Christi tutissimum:* It is safest to trust in the merits of Christ:" would we have affirmed that notwithstanding his wrong opinions, he had no share in his righteousness?

5. "But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers?" In this: all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. I say again, not for the sake of any thing in them or done by them, of their own righteousness or works. "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saved us. By grace ye are saved through faith.—Not of works, lest any man should boast:" but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for us. We are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this is not only the means of our *obtaining* the favour of God but of continuing therein. It is thus we come to God at first: it is by the same we come unto him ever after. We walk in one and the same *new* and *living* way, till our spirit returns to God.

6. And this is the doctrine, which I have constantly believed and taught, for near eight and twenty

twenty years. This I publiſhed to all the world in the year 1738, and ten or twelve times ſince, in thoſe words, and many others to the ſame effect, extracted from the homilies of our church. "Theſe things muſt neceſſarily go together in our juſtification, upon God's part his great mercy and grace, upon Chriſt's part, the ſanctification of God's juſtice, and on our part, faith in the merits of Chriſt. So that the grace of God doth not ſhut out the righteouſneſs of God in our juſtification, but only ſhutteth out the righteouſneſs of man, as to *deſerving* our juſtification."

"That we are juſtified by faith alone, is ſpoken to take away clearly all merit of our works, and wholly to aſcribe the *merit* and *deſerving* of our juſtification to Chriſt only. Our juſtification comes freely of the mercy of God. For whereas all the world was not able to pay any part toward our ranſom, it pleaſed him, without any of our deſerving, to prepare for us Chriſt's body and blood, whereby our ranſom might be paid, and his juſtice ſatisfied. Chriſt therefore is now the righteouſneſs of all them that truly believe in him."

7. The hymns publiſhed a year or two after this, and ſince republiſhed ſeveral times (a clear teſtimony that my judgment was ſtill the ſame) ſpeak full to the ſame purpoſe. To cite all the paſſages to this effect, would be to tranſcribe a great part of the volumes. Take one for all, which was reprinted ſeven years ago, five years ago, two years ago, and ſome months ſince.

"Jeſu, thy blood and righteouſneſs
My beauty are, my glorious dreſs:

Midſt flaming worlds in theſe array'd
With joy ſhall I lift up my head."

The whole hymn expreſſes the ſame ſentiment from the beginning to the end.

8. In the ſermon on juſtification publiſhed nineteen, and again ſeven or eight years ago, I expreſs the ſame thing in theſe words, p. 87. "In conſidering of this, that the Son of God hath *taſted death for every man*, God hath now "reconciled the world unto himſelf, not imputing to them their former treſpaſſes." So that for the ſake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and ſuffered for us, God now vouchſafes on one only condition (which himſelf alſo enables us to perform) both to remit the puniſhment due to our ſins, to re-inſtate us in his favour, and to reſtore our dead ſouls to ſpiritual life, as the earneſt of life eternal."

9. This is more largely and particularly expreſſed in the treatiſe on juſtification, which I publiſhed laſt year. "If we take the phraſe of *imputing Chriſt's righteouſneſs*, for the beſtowing (as it were) the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, including his obedience, as well paſſive as active in the return of it; that is, in the privileges, bleſſings and benefits purchaſed by it: ſo a believer may be ſaid to be juſtified, by *the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed*." The meaning is, God juſtifies the believer, for the ſake of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, and not for any righteouſneſs of his own. So *Calvin* (*Inſtitut.* l. 2. c. 17.) "Chriſt by his obedience procured and merited for us grace or favour with God the Father. Again, Chriſt by his obedience procured or purchaſed righteouſneſs for us. And yet again: all ſuch expreſſions as theſe, That we are juſtified by the grace of God, that Chriſt is

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our righteouſneſs, that righteouſneſs was procured for us by the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, import the ſame thing:" namely, "that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, both his active and paſſive righteouſneſs, is the meritorious cauſe of our juſtification, and has procured for us at God's hand, that upon our believing, we ſhould be accounted righteous by him." p. 5.

10. But perhaps ſome will object, "Nay, but you affirm, that *faith is imputed to us for righteouſneſs.*" St. Paul affirms this over and over; therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteouſneſs to every believer; namely, faith in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, but this is exactly the ſame thing, which has been ſaid before. For by that expreſſion, I mean neither more nor leſs, than that we are juſtified by faith, not by works: or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the ſake of what Chriſt has done and ſuffered.

11. "But is not a believer, inveſted or cloathed with the righteouſneſs of Chriſt?" Undoubtedly he is. And accordingly the words above recited, are the language of every believing heart.

"Jeſu, thy blood and righteouſneſs
My beauty are, my glorious dreſs."

That is, for the ſake of thy active and paſſive righteouſneſs, I am forgiven and accepted of God.

"But muſt not we put off the filthy rags of our own righteouſneſs, before we can put on the ſpotleſs righteouſneſs of Chriſt?" Certainly we muſt; that is, in plain terms, we muſt *repent*, before we can *believe the goſpel*. We muſt be cut off from dependance upon ourſelves, before we

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can depend upon Chriſt. We muſt caſt away all confidence in our own righteouſneſs, or we cannot have a true confidence in his. Till we are delivered from truſting in any thing that we do, we cannot thoroughly truſt in what he has done and ſuffered. Firſt "we receive the ſentence of death in ourſelves;" then we truſt in him that lived and died for us.

12. "But do not you believe *inherent* righteouſneſs?" Yes, in its proper place: not as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, but as the *fruit* of it: not in the place of *imputed* righteouſneſs, but as conſequent upon it. That is, I believe God *implants* righteouſneſs, in every one to whom he has *imputed* it. I believe "Jeſus Chriſt is made of God unto us ſanctification," as well as righteouſneſs: or, that God ſanctifies, as well as juſtifies, all them that believe in him. They to whom the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed, are made righteous by the ſpirit of Chriſt, are renewed in the image of God, "after the likeneſs wherein they were created, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs."

13. "But do not you put faith in the room of Chriſt, or of his righteouſneſs?" By no means. I take particular care, to put each of theſe in its proper place. The righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the whole and ſole *foundation* of all our hope. It is by faith that the Holy Ghoſt enables us, to build upon this foundation. God gives this faith. In that moment we are accepted of God: and yet, not for the ſake of that faith, but of what Chriſt has done and ſuffered for us. You ſee, each of theſe has its proper place, and neither claſhes with the other: we believe, we love; we endea-

vour

vour to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameleſs. Yet,

While thus we beſtow
Our moments below,
Ourſelves we forſake,
And refuge in Jeſus's righteouſneſs take.
His paſſion alone,
The foundation we own:
And pardon we claim,
And eternal redemption in Jeſus's name.

14. I therefore no more deny the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, than I do the Godhead of Chriſt. And a man may full as juſtly charge me with denying the one as the other. Neither do I deny *imputed righteouſneſs:* this is another unkind and unjuſt accuſation. I always did, and do ſtill continually affirm, that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed to every believer. But who deny it? Why, all *infidels*, whether baptized or unbaptized: all who affirm the glorious goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to be a *cunningly* devited fable. All *Socinians* and *Arians:* all who deny the ſupreme Godhead of the Lord that bought them. They of conſequence deny his divine righteouſneſs, as they ſuppoſe him to be a mere creature. And they deny his human righteouſneſs, as imputed to any man, ſeeing they believe every one is accepted *for his own righteouſneſs.*

15. The human righteouſneſs of Chriſt, at leaſt the imputation of it, as the whole and ſole meritorious cauſe, of the juſtification of a ſinner before God, is likewiſe denied by the members of the church of *Rome:* by all of them who are true to the principles of their own church. But undoubtedly there are many among them, whoſe experience

experience goes beyond their principles. Who though they are far from expreſſing themſelves juſtly, yet feel what they know not how to expreſs. Yea, although their conceptions of this great truth, be as crude as their expreſſions, yet *with their heart they believe;* they reſt on Chriſt alone, both *unto* preſent and eternal *ſalvation.*

16. With theſe we may rank thoſe even in the reformed churches, who are uſually termed *Myſtics.* One of the chief of theſe in the preſent century (at leaſt in *England*) was Mr. *Law.* It is well known that he abſolutely and zealouſly denied, the imputation of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt: as zealouſly as *Robert Barclay,* who ſcruples not to ſay, "Imputed righteouſneſs, imputed nonſenſe!" The body of the people known by the name of Quakers, eſpouſe the ſame ſentiment. Nay, the generality of thoſe who profeſs themſelves members of the *church England,* are either totally ignorant of the matter, and know nothing about *imputed righteouſneſs,* or deny this and juſtification by faith together, as deſtructive of good works. To theſe we may add a conſiderable number of the people vulgarly ſtiled Anabaptiſts, together with thouſands of Preſbyterians and Independents lately enlightened by the writings of Dr. *Taylor.* On the laſt I am not called to paſs any ſentence: I leave them to him that made them. But will any one dare to affirm, that all Myſtics (ſuch as Mr. *Law* in particular) all Quakers, all Preſbyterians or Independents, and all members of the Church of *England,* who are not clear in their opinions or expreſſions, are void of all chriſtian experience? That conſequently they are all in a ſtate of damnation,

nation, *without hope, without God in the world?* However confused their ideas may be, however improper their language, may there not be many of them whose heart is right toward God, and who effectually know *the Lord our righteousness?*

17. But blessed be God, we are not among those who are so dark in their conceptions and expressions. We no more deny the *phrase* than the *thing;* but we are unwilling to obtrude it on other men. Let them use either this, or such other expressions as they judge to be more exactly scriptural, provided their heart rests only on what Christ has done and suffered, for pardon, grace, and glory. I cannot express this better than in Mr. *Hervey's* words, worthy to be wrote in letters of gold. "We are not solicitous as to any *particular set of phrases.* Only let men be humbled as repenting criminals at Christ's feet, let them rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blessed immortality."

18. Is there any need, is there any possibility of saying more? Let us only abide by this declaration, and all the contention about this or that *particular phrase* is torn up by the roots. Keep to this: "All who are humbled as repenting criminals at Christ's feet, and rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, are in the way to a blessed immortality:" and what room for dispute? Who denies this? Do we not all meet on this ground? What then shall we wrangle about? A man of peace here proposes terms of accommodation to all the contending parties. We desire no better. We accept of the terms. We subscribe to them with heart and hand. Whoever

ever refuſes ſo to do, ſet a mark upon that man! He is an enemy of peace, a troubler of Iſrael, a diſturber of the church of God.

19 In the mean time, what we are afraid of is this; leſt any ſhould uſe the phraſe, "The righteouſneſs of Chriſt," or, The righteouſneſs of Chriſt is "*imputed to me*," as a cover for his unrighteouſneſs. We have known this done a thouſand times. A man has been reproved, ſuppoſe, for drunkenneſs. "O," ſaid he, "I pretend to no righteouſneſs of *my own:* Chriſt is my righteouſneſs." Another has been told, that "the extortioner, the unjuſt, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God." He replies with all aſſurance, "I am unjuſt in myſelf, but I have a ſpotleſs righteouſneſs in Chriſt." And thus though a man be as far from the practice as from the tempers of a Chriſtian, though he neither has the mind which was in Chriſt, nor in any reſpect walks as he walked, yet he has armour of proof againſt all conviction, in what he calls the "righteouſneſs of Chriſt."

20. It is the ſeeing ſo many deplorable inſtances of this kind, which makes us ſparing in the uſe of theſe expreſſions. And I cannot but call upon all of you, who uſe them frequently, and beſeech you in the name of God our Saviour, whoſe you are, and whom you ſerve, earneſtly to guard all that hear you againſt this accurſed abuſe of them. O warn them (it may be they will hear *your* voice) againſt "continuing in ſin that grace may abound!" Warn them againſt making "Chriſt the miniſter of ſin!" Againſt making void that ſolemn decree of God, "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord," by a vain imagination of being "holy in Chriſt." O warn them, that if they

remain

remain unrighteous, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt will profit them nothing! Cry aloud, (Is there not a cauſe?) that for this very end the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed to us, that "the righteouſneſs of the law may be fulfilled in us," and that we may "live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world."

It remains only, to make a ſhort and plain application. And firſt I would addreſs myſelf to you, who violently oppoſe theſe expreſſions, and are ready to condemn all that uſe them as Antinomians. But is not this bending the bow too much the other way? Why ſhould you quarrel with *them*, for uſing the phraſes they like, any more than they with *you*, for taking the ſame liberty? Or if they do quarrel with you upon that account, do not imitate the bigotry which you blame. At leaſt allow *them* the liberty which they ought to allow *you*. And why ſhould you be angry at an *expreſſion?* "O, it has been abuſed." And what expreſſion has not? However the abuſe may be removed, and at the ſame time the uſe remain. Above all, be ſure to retain the important ſenſe which is couched under that expreſſion. All the bleſſings I enjoy, all I hope for in time and in eternity, are given wholly and ſolely for the ſake of what Chriſt has done and ſuffered for me.

I would, ſecondly, add a few words, to you who are fond of theſe expreſſions. And permit me to aſk, Do not I allow enough? What can any reaſonable man deſire more? I allow the whole *ſenſe* which you contend for: that we have every bleſſing "through the righteouſneſs of God our Saviour." I allow *you* to uſe whatever expreſſions you chuſe, and that a thouſand times

over: only guarding them against that dreadful abuse, which you are as deeply concerned to prevent as I am. I myself frequently use the expression in question, "imputed righteousness:" and often put this and the like expressions into the mouth of a whole congregation. But allow me liberty of conscience herein: allow me the right of private judgment. Allow me to use it just as often as I judge it preferable to any other expression. And be not angry with me, if I cannot judge it proper to use any one expression every two minutes. *You* may if you please: but do not condemn me, because I do not. Do not, for this represent me as a papist, or "an enemy to the righteousness of Christ." Bear with *me*, as I do with *you*: else how shall we "fulfil the law of Christ?" Do not make tragical outcries, as though I was "subverting the very foundations of christianity." Whoever does this, does me much wrong: the Lord lay it not to his charge! I lay, and have done for many years, the very same foundation with you. And indeed "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." I build inward and outward holiness thereon, as you do, even by faith. Do not therefore suffer any distaste, or unkindness, no, not any shyness or coldness in your heart. If there were a *difference of opinion*, where is our religion, if we cannot *think and let think?* What hinders, but you may forgive *me*, as easily as I forgive *you?* How much more, when there is only *a difference of expression?* Nay, hardly so much as that? All the dispute being only, whether a particular mode of expression, shall be used *more or less frequently?* Surely we must earnestly desire to contend with one another,

before

before we can make this a bone of contention! O let us not any more, for ſuch very trifles as theſe, give our common enemies room to blaſpheme! Rather let us at length cut off occaſion for them that ſeek occaſion! Let us at length (O why was it not done before?) join hearts and hands in the ſervice of our great Maſter. As we have *one Lord, one faith, one hope of our calling*, let us all ſtrengthen each others hands in God, and with one heart and one mouth declare to all mankind, "the Lord our righteouſneſs."

SERMON LXII.

THE GENERAL DELIVERANCE.

ROMANS viii. 19, 20, 21, 22.

The earneſt expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifeſtation of the ſons of God.
For the creature was made ſubject to vanity, not willingly, but by reaſon of him that ſubjected it.
Yet *in hope that the creature itſelf alſo ſhall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God.*
For we know, that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.

1. NOTHING is more ſure, than that as *the Lord is loving to every man*, ſo his mercy *is over all his works*; all that have ſenſe, all that are capable of pleaſure or pain, of happineſs or miſery. In conſequence of this, *he openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs: he preparth food for cattle*, as well as *herbs for the children of men*. He provideth for the fowls of

of the air, *feeding the young ravens when they cry unto him. He ſendeth the ſprings into the rivers, that run along the hills*, to give drink to every beaſt of the field, and that even *the wild aſſes* may *quench their thirſt*. And ſuitably to this, he directs us to be tender of even meaner creatures, to ſhew mercy to theſe alſo. *Thou ſhalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*, (a cuſtom which is obſerved in the Eaſtern countries, even to this day.) And this is by no means contradicted by St. Paul's queſtion, *Doth God take care for oxen?* Without doubt, he does. We cannot deny it, without flatly contradicting his word. The plain meaning of the Apoſtle is, Is this all that is implied in the text? Hath it not a farther meaning? Does it not teach us, We are to feed the bodies of thoſe, whom we deſire to feed our ſouls? Mean time it is certain, God *giveth graſs for the cattle*, as well as *herbs for the uſe of men*.

2. But how are theſe Scriptures reconcileable to the preſent ſtate of things? How are they conſiſtent with what we daily ſee round about us, in every part of the creation? If the Creator and Father of every living thing, is rich in mercy towards all: if he does not overlook or deſpiſe any of the works of his own hands: if he wills even the meaneſt of them to be happy, according to their degree: how comes it to paſs, that ſuch a complication of evils oppreſſes, yea overwhelms them? How is it, that miſery, of all kinds overſpreads the face of the earth? This is a queſtion which has puzzled the wiſeſt philoſophers in all ages. And it cannot be anſwered, without having recourſe to the oracles of God. But taking theſe for our guide, we may enquire,

I. What was the original ſtate of the Brute Creation?

II. In what ſtate is it at preſent? And

III. In what ſtate will it be, at the manifeſtation of the children of God!

I. 1. We may enquire in the firſt place, What was the original ſtate of the Brute Creation? And may not we learn this, even from the place which was aſſigned them, namely, the garden of God? All the beaſts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, were with Adam in Paradiſe. And there is no queſtion, but their ſtate was ſuited to their place: it was paradiſiacal, perfectly happy. Undoubtedly it bore a near reſemblance to the ſtate of man himſelf. By taking therefore a ſhort view of the one, we may conceive the other. Now *man was made in the image of God.* But *God is a Spirit.* So therefore was man. Only that ſpirit being deſigned to dwell on earth, was lodged in an earthly tabernacle. As ſuch he had an innate principle of *ſelf motion.* And ſo, it ſeems, has every ſpirit in the univerſe; this being the proper diſtinguiſhing difference between Spirit and Matter, which is totally, eſſentially paſſive and inactive, as appears from a thouſand experiments. He was, after the likeneſs of his Creator, endued with *underſtanding*, a capacity of apprehending whatever objects were brought before it, and of judging concerning them. He was endued with a *will*, exerting itſelf in various affections and paſſions: and laſtly, with *liberty*, or freedom of choice, without which all the reſt would have been in vain, and he would have been no more capable of ſerving his Creator, than a piece of earth or marble. He would have been as incapable

capable of vice or virtue, as any part of the inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted.

2. How far his power of self-motion then extended, it is impossible for us to determine. It is probable, that he had a far higher degree, both of swiftness and strength, than any of his posterity ever had, and much less any of the lower creatures. It is certain, he had such strength of understanding, as no man ever since had. His understanding was perfect in its kind: capable of apprehending all things clearly, and judging concerning them according to truth, without any mixture of error. His will had no wrong bias of any sort, but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring understanding; embracing nothing but good, and every good in proportion to its degree of intrinsic goodness. His liberty likewise was wholly guided by his understanding: he chose or refused, according to its direction. Above all (which was his highest excellence, far more valuable than all the rest put together) he was a creature capable of God, capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. And in fact, he did know God, did unfeignedly love, and uniformly obey him. This was the supreme perfection of man, (as it is of all intelligent beings,) the continually seeing, and loving and obeying the Father of the spirits of all flesh. From this right state, and right use of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed. In this the essence of his happiness consisted; but it was increased by all the things that were round about him. He saw with unspeakable plea-

sure,

ſure, the order, the beauty, the harmony of all the creatures: of all animated, all inanimate nature; the ſerenity of the ſkies, the ſun walking in brightneſs, the ſweetly variegated clothing of the earth; the trees, the fruits, the flowers;

"And liquid lapſe of murmuring ſtreams."

Nor was this pleaſure interrupted by evil of any kind. It had no alloy of ſorrow, or pain, whether of body or mind. For while he was innocent he was impaſſive, incapable of ſuffering. Nothing could ſtain his purity of joy. And to crown all, he was immortal.

3. To this creature, endued with all theſe excellent faculties, thus qualified for his high charge, God ſaid, "Have thou dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Gen. i. 28. And ſo the Pſalmiſt, "Thou madeſt him to have dominion over the work of thy hands; thou haſt put all things under his feet. All ſheep and oxen, yea and the beaſts of the field: the fowl of the air, and the fiſhes of the ſea, and whatſoever paſſeth through the paths of the ſeas!" Pſal. viii. ver. 6, &c. So that man was God's Vicegerent upon earth, the Prince and Governor of this lower world; and all the bleſſings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator, and the whole brute creation.

4. But what bleſſings were thoſe that were then conveyed, through man, to the lower creatures? What was the original ſtate of the brute creatures, when they were firſt created? This deſerves a more attentive conſideration, than has been uſually given it. It is certain theſe, as well

as

as man, had an innate principle of *self-motion:* and that at leaſt in as high a degree as they enjoy it at this day. Again. They were endued with a degree of *underſtanding*, not leſs than that they are poſſeſt of now. They had alſo a *will*, including various paſſions, which likewiſe they ſtill enjoy. And they had *liberty*, a power of choice, a degree of which is ſtill found in every living creature. Nor can we doubt, but their underſtanding too was in the beginning perfect in its kind. Their paſſions and affections were regular, and their choice always guided by their underſtanding.

5. What then is the barrier between men and brutes? The line which they cannot paſs? It was not reaſon. Set aſide that ambiguous term: exchange it for the plain word, underſtanding: and who can deny that brutes have this? We may as well deny that they have ſight or hearing. But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe, that they are in any degree capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the ſpecific difference between man and brute: the great gulph which they cannot paſs over. And as a loving obedience to God was the perfection of men, ſo a loving obedience to man was the perfection of brutes. And as long as they continued in this, they were happy after their kind: happy in the right ſtate and the right uſe of their reſpective faculties. Yea, and ſo long they had ſome ſhadowy reſemblance of even *moral goodneſs*. For they had gratitude to man for benefits received, and a reverence for him. They had likewiſe a kind of benevolence to each other, unmixt with any contrary temper. How *beautiful* many of them were, we may conjecture from that which

ſtill

ſtill remains: and that, not only in the nobleſt creatures, but in thoſe of the loweſt order. And they were all ſurrounded not only with plenteous food, but with every thing that could give them pleaſure; pleaſure unmixt with pain; for pain was not yet: it had not entered into paradiſe. And they too were immortal. For *God made not Death: neither hath he pleaſure in the death of any living.*

6. How true then is that word, *God ſaw every thing that he had made: and behold it was very good.* But how far is this from being the preſent caſe? In what a condition is the whole lower world? To ſay nothing of inanimate nature, wherein all the elements ſeem to be out of courſe, and by turns to fight againſt man. Since man rebelled againſt his Maker; in what a ſtate is all animated nature? Well might the Apoſtle ſay of this, "The whole creation groaneth together, and travaileth together in pain until now." This directly refers to the brute creation. In what ſtate this is at preſent we are now to conſider.

II. 1. As all the bleſſings of God in paradiſe flowed through man to the inferior creatures: as man was the great channel of communication, between the Creator and the whole brute creation: ſo when man made himſelf incapable of tranſmitting thoſe bleſſings, that communication was neceſſarily cut off. The intercourſe between God and the inferior creatures being ſtopped, thoſe bleſſings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that *the creature*, every creature *was ſubjected to vanity:* to ſorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils. *Not* indeed *willingly;* not by its own choice; but by any

any act or deed of its own: *but by reason of him that subjected it;* by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil.

2. But in what respects was *the creature*, every creature, then *made subject to vanity?* What did the meaner creatures suffer, when man rebelled against God? It is probable, they sustained much loss, even in the lower faculties, their vigour, strength and swiftness. But undoubtedly they suffered far more in their understanding, more than we can easily conceive. Perhaps, insects and worms had then as much understanding as the most intelligent brutes have now, whereas millions of creatures have at present little more understanding than the earth on which they crawl, or the rock to which they adhere. They suffered still more in their will, in their passions, which were then variously distorted, and frequently set in flat opposition to the little understanding that was left them. Their liberty likewise was greatly impaired, yea, in many cases totally destroyed. They are still utterly enslaved to irrational appetites, which have the full dominion over them. The very foundations of their nature are out of course, are turned upside down. As man is deprived of *his* perfection, his loving obedience to God, so brutes are deprived of *their* perfection, their loving obedience to man. The far greater part of them flee from him, studiously avoid his hated presence. The most of the rest set him at open defiance, yea, destroy him, if it be in their power. A few only, those we commonly term domestic animals, retain more or less of their original disposition, (through the mercy of God) love him still and pay obedience to him.

3. Setting

3. Setting these few aside, how little shadow of good, of gratitude, of benevolence, of any right temper is now to be found in any part of the brute creation? On the contrary, what savage fierceness, what unrelenting cruelty, are invariably observed in thousands of creatures, yea, is inseparable from their natures? Is it only the Lion, the Tyger, the Wolf, among the inhabitants of the forests and plains; the Shark, and a few more voracious monsters among the inhabitants of the waters; or the Eagle among birds, that tears the flesh, sucks the blood, and crushes the bones of their helpless fellow-creatures? Nay, the harmless Fly, the laborious Ant, the painted Butterfly, are treated in the same merciless manner, even by the innocent Songsters of the grove! The innumerable tribes of poor insects are continually devoured by them. And whereas there is but a small number, comparatively, of beasts of prey on the earth, it is quite otherwise in the liquid element: there are but few inhabitants of the waters, whether of the sea, or of the rivers, which do not devour whatsoever they can master. Yea, they exceed herein all the beasts of the forest, and all the birds of prey. For none of these have been ever observed to prey upon their own species,

Savis inter se convenit ursis.

Even savage-bears will not each other tear.

But the water-savages swallow up all, even of their own kind, that are smaller and weaker than themselves: yea, such at present is the miserable constitution of the world, to such *vanity* is it now *subjected*, that an immense majority of creatures, perhaps a million to one, can no otherwise

wiſe preſerve their own lives than by deſtroying their fellow-creatures.

4. And is not the very form, the outward appearance of many of the creatures, as horrid as their diſpoſitions? Where is the beauty which was ſtamped upon them, when they came firſt out of the hands of their Creator? There is not the leaſt trace of it left: ſo far from it, that they are ſhocking to behold! Nay, they are not only terrible and griſly to look upon, but deformed, and that to a high degree. Yet their features, ugly as they are at beſt, are frequently made more deformed than uſual, when they are diſtorted by pain, which they cannot avoid, any more than the wretched ſons of men. Pain of various kinds, weakneſs, ſickneſs, diſeaſes innumerable, come upon them, perhaps from within, perhaps from one another, perhaps from the inclemency of ſeaſons, from fire, hail, ſnow, or ſtorm, or from a thouſand cauſes which they cannot foreſee, or prevent.

5. Thus, "as by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; even ſo death paſſed upon all men." And not on man only, but on thoſe creatures alſo, that "did not ſin after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion." And not death alone came upon them, but all its train of preparatory evils: pain, and ten thouſand ſufferings. Nor theſe only, but likewiſe all thoſe irregular paſſions, all thoſe unlovely tempers, (which in men are ſins, and even in brutes, are ſources of miſery) *paſſed upon all* the inhabitants of the earth, and remain in all, except the children of God.

6. During this ſeaſon of *vanity*, not only the feebler creatures are continually deſtroyed by the

ſtronger; not only the ſtrong are frequently deſtroyed by thoſe that are of equal ſtrength; but both the one and the other are expoſed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy, man. And if his ſwiftneſs or ſtrength is not equal to theirs, yet his art more than ſupplies that defect. By this he eludes all their force, how great ſo ever it be: by this he defeats all their ſwiftneſs, and notwithſtanding their various ſhifts and contrivances, diſcovers all their retreats. He purſues them over the wildeſt plains, and through the thickeſt foreſts. He overtakes them in the fields of air, he finds them out in the depths of the ſea. Nor are the mild and friendly creatures, who ſtill own his ſway, and are duteous to his commands, ſecured thereby from more than brutal violence, from outrage and abuſe of various kinds. Is the generous horſe, that ſerves his maſter's neceſſity or pleaſure, with unwearied diligence? is the faithful dog, that waits the motion of his hand, or his eye, exempt from this? What returns for their long and faithful ſervice, do many of theſe poor creatures find? And what a dreadful difference is there between what they ſuffer from their fellow-brutes, and what they ſuffer from the tyrant, man? The Lion, the Tiger, or the Shark, gives them pain from mere neceſſity, in order to prolong their own life; and puts them out of their pain at once. But the human ſhark, without any ſuch neceſſity, torments them of his free choice: and perhaps continues their lingering pain, till after months or years, death ſigns their releaſe.

III. 1. But will *the creature*, will even the brute creation always remain in this deplorable condition?

condition? God forbid that we ſhould affirm this, yea, or even entertain ſuch a thought! While *the whole creation groaneth together*, (whether men attend or not,) their groans are not diſperſed in idle air, but enter into the ears of him that made them. While his creatures *travail together in pain*, he knoweth all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth, which ſhall be accompliſhed in its ſeaſon. He ſeeth *the earneſt expectation* wherewith the whole animated creation *waiteth for* that final *manifeſtation of the ſons of God:* in which *they themſelves alſo ſhall be delivered*, (not by annihilation: annihilation is not deliverance,) *from the* preſent *bondage of corruption, into* a meaſure of *the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

2. Nothing can be more expreſs. Away with vulgar prejudices, and let the plain word of God take place. They *ſhall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into glorious liberty:* even a meaſure, according as they are capable, of *the liberty of the children of God.*

A general view of this is given us in the twenty-firſt chapter of the *Revelation.* When he that *ſitteth on the great white throne* hath pronounced, *Behold I make all things new:* when the word is fulfilled, *The tabernacle of God is with men, and they ſhall be his people; and God himſelf ſhall be with them and be their God:* then the following bleſſing ſhall take place, (not only on the children of men; there is no ſuch reſtriction in the text; but) on every creature according to its capacity. *God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying. Neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are paſſed away.*

3. To descend to a few particulars. The whole brute creation will then undoubtedly be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness, which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it, as much higher than that, as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm. And whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase, being exalted and refined in a manner, which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. The liberty they then had will be completely restored, and they will be free in all their motions. They will be delivered from all irregular appetites, from all unruly passions, from every disposition that is either evil in itself, or has any tendency to evil. No rage will be found in any creature, no fierceness, no cruelty, or thirst for blood. So far from it, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Isaiah xi. 6, &c.

4. Thus in that day all the *vanity* to which they are now helplessly *subject*, will be abolished: they will suffer no more, either from within or without: the days of their groaning are ended. At the same time there can be no reasonable doubt, but all the horridness of their appearance, and all the deformity of their aspect will vanish away, and be exchanged for their primeval beauty.

ty. And with their beauty, their happineſs will return, to which there can then be no obſtruction. As there will be nothing within, ſo there will be nothing without, to give them any uneaſineſs: no heat nor cold, no ſtorm nor tempeſt, but one perennial ſpring. In the new earth, as well as in the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but every thing that the wiſdom and goodneſs of God can create to give happineſs. As a recompence for what they once ſuffered, while under the "bondage of corruption," when God has "renewed the face of the earth," and their corruptible body has put on incorruption, they ſhall enjoy happineſs, ſuited to their ſtate, without interruption and without end.

5. But though I doubt not, that the Father of all has a tender regard for even his loweſt creatures, and that in conſequence of this, he will make them large amends for all they ſuffer while under their preſent bondage, yet I dare not affirm, that he has an *equal regard* for them and for the children of men. I do not believe, that

> "He ſees *with equal eyes*, as Lord of All,
> A Hero periſh, or a Sparrow fall!"

By no means. This is exceeding pretty; but it is abſolutely falſe. For though

> "Mercy, with truth and endleſs grace,
> O'er all his works doth reign,
> Yet chiefly he delights to bleſs
> His favourite creature, Man."

God regards his meaneſt creatures much; but he regards man much more. He does not *equally regard* a Hero and a Sparrow, the beſt of men

and the loweſt of brutes. "How *much more* does your heavenly Father care for you?" ſays he who is *in the boſom of the Father*. Thoſe who thus ſtrain the point are clearly confuted by his queſtion, "Are not ye *much better* than they?" Let it ſuffice, that God regards every thing that he hath made, in its own order, and in proportion to that meaſure of his own image, which he has ſtamped upon it.

6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture, concerning the brute creation? What if it ſhould then pleaſe the All-wiſe, the All-gracious Creator, to raiſe them higher in the ſcale of beings? What if it ſhould pleaſe him, when he makes us *equal to Angels*, to make them what we are now? Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being? If it ſhould be ſo, ought our eye to be evil, becauſe he is good? However this be, he will certainly do what will be moſt for his own glory.

7. If it be objected to all this, (as very probably it will.) "But of what uſe will thoſe creatures be, in that future ſtate?" I anſwer this by another queſtion, What uſe are they now? If there be, (as has commonly been ſuppoſed) eight thouſand ſpecies of inſects who is able to inform us of what uſe ſeven thouſand of them are? If there are four thouſand ſpecies of fiſhes, who can tell us, of what uſe are more than three thouſand of them? If there are ſix hundred ſorts of birds, who can tell of what uſe five hundred of thoſe ſpecies are? If there be four hundred ſorts of beaſts, to what uſe do three hundred of them ſerve? Conſider this; conſider how little we know of even the preſent deſigns of

of God: and then you will not wonder, that we know ſtill leſs, of what he deſigns to do in the new heavens and the new earth.

8. "But what end does it anſwer, to dwell upon this ſubject which we ſo imperfectly underſtand?" To conſider ſo much as we do underſtand, ſo much as God has been pleaſed to reveal to us, may anſwer that excellent end, to illuſtrate that mercy of God, which *is over all his works.* And it may exceedingly confirm our belief, that much more he is *loving to every man.* For how well may we urge our Lord's word, *Are not ye much better than they?* If then the Lord takes ſuch care of the fowls of the air, and of the beaſts of the field, ſhall he not much more take care of *you*, creatures of a nobler order? If *the Lord will ſave*, (as the inſpired writer affirms) *both man and beaſt*, in their ſeveral degrees, ſurely *the children of men* may *put their truſt under the ſhadow of his wings!*

9. May it not anſwer another end, namely, furniſh us with a full anſwer to a plauſible objection againſt the juſtice of God, in ſuffering numberleſs creatures, that never had ſinned, to be ſo ſeverely puniſhed? They could not ſin, for they were not moral agents. Yet how ſeverely do they ſuffer? Yea, many of them, beaſts of burden in particular, almoſt the whole time of their abode on earth. So that they can have no retribution here below. But the objection vaniſhes away, if we conſider, that ſomething better remains after death, for theſe poor creatures alſo; that theſe likewiſe ſhall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and ſhall then receive an ample amends for all their preſent ſufferings.

10. One

10. One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate him, whose mercy is over all his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect, that as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath prepared for them. Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom, into the liberty of the children of God.

11. From what has been said I cannot but draw one inference, which no man of reason can deny. If it is this which distinguishes men from beasts, That they are creatures capable of God; capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying him: then whoever is *without God in the world;* whoever does not know, or love, or enjoy God, and is not careful about the matter, does in effect disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast. Let such vouchsafe a little attention to those remarkable words of Solomon; *I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men,—they might see, that they themselves are beasts.** The sons of men are undoubtedly beasts; and that by their own act and deed. For they deliberately and wilfully disclaim the sole characteristic of human nature. It is true they may have a share of reason: they have speech, and they walk erect. But they have not the mark, the

* Eccles. iii. 18.

the only mark, which totally ſeparates man from the brute creation. *That which befalleth beaſts, the ſame thing befalleth them.* They are equally without God in the world, *ſo that a man* (of this kind) *hath no pre-eminence above a beaſt.*

12. So much more, let all thoſe who are of a nobler turn of mind, aſſert the diſtinguiſhing dignity of their nature! Let all who are of a more generous ſpirit, know and maintain their rank in the ſcale of beings. Reſt not, till you enjoy the privilege of humanity, the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the ſource of your being!

"Know God, and teach your ſouls to know
The joys that from religion flow."

Give your hearts to him, who, together with ten thouſand bleſſings, has *given* you *his Son, his only Son!* Let your continual *fellowſhip* be *with the Father, and with his Son, Jeſus Chriſt!* Let God be in all your thoughts, and ye will be men indeed: let him be your God and your All! The deſire of your eyes, the joy of your heart, and your portion for ever!

SERMON

SERMON LXIII.

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 7.

The myſtery of iniquity doth already work.

1. WITHOUT enquiring how far theſe words refer, to any particular event in the Chriſtian Church, I would at preſent take occaſion from them, to conſider that important queſtion, in what manner *the myſtery of iniquity* hath *wrought* among us, till it hath well-nigh covered the whole earth.

2. It is certain, that *God made man upright*, perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But by rebelling againſt God, he deſtroyed himſelf, loſt the favour and the image of God, and entailed ſin, with its attendant, pain, on himſelf and all his poſterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpleſs, hopeleſs ſtate. He immediately

immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, "who is the brightneſs of his glory, the expreſs image of his perſon," to be the Saviour of men, "the propitiation for the ſins of the whole world:" the great Phyſician, who by his Almighty Spirit, ſhould heal the ſickneſs of their ſouls, and reſtore them not only to the favour, but to "the image of God, wherein they were created."

3. This great "myſtery of godlineſs" began to work, from the very time of the original promiſe. Accordingly the Lamb being (in the purpoſe of God) "ſlain from the beginning of the world," from the ſame period his ſanctifying Spirit began to renew the ſouls of men. We have an undeniable inſtance of this in Abel, who *obtained a teſtimony* from God *that he was righteous*, Heb. xi. 6. And from that very time all that were partakers of the ſame faith, were partakers of the ſame ſalvation; were not only reinſtated in the favour, but likewiſe reſtored to the image of God.

4. But how exceeding ſmall was the number of theſe, even from the earlieſt ages? No ſooner did "the ſons of men multiply upon the face of the earth," than God looking down from heaven, "ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great upon earth:" ſo great, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, only evil, and that *continually*," Gen. vi. 1—5. And ſo it remained without any intermiſſion, till God executed that terrible ſentence, "I will deſtroy man whom I have created, from the face of the of the earth," ver. 7.

5. "Only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, being a juſt man and perfect in his generations."

nerations." Him therefore, with his wife, his ſons, and their wives, God preſerved from the general deſtruction. And one might have imagined, that this ſmall remnant, would likewiſe have been *perfect in their generations.* But how far was this from being the caſe? Preſently after this ſignal deliverance, we find one of them, *Ham*, involved in ſin, and under his father's curſe, and how did the myſtery of iniquity afterwards work, not only in the poſterity of *Ham*, but in the poſterity of *Japhet*; yea, and of *Shem*, *Abraham* and his family only excepted?

6. Yea, how did it work even in the poſterity of *Abraham*, in God's choſen people? Were not theſe alſo down to *Moſes*, to *David*, to *Malachi*, to *Herod* the Great, "a ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, continually forſaking the Lord, and provoking the Holy One of Iſrael?" And yet we have no reaſon to believe, that theſe were worſe than the nations that ſurrounded them, who were univerſally ſwallowed up in all manner of wickedneſs, as well as damnable idolatries, not having the God of heaven *in all their thoughts*, but working all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.

7. In the fulneſs of time, when iniquity of every kind, when ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs had ſpread over all nations, and covered the earth as a flood: it pleaſed God to lift up a ſtandard againſt it, "by bringing his firſt-begotten into the world. Now then, one would expect, the myſtery of godlineſs would totally prevail over the myſtery of iniquity. The Son of God would be *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *ſalvation to his people Iſrael.* All Iſrael, one would think, yea, and all the earth will ſoon

be filled with the glory of the Lord. Nay: the myſtery of iniquity prevailed ſtill, well nigh over the face of the earth. How exceeding ſmall was the number of thoſe, whoſe ſouls were healed by the Son of God himſelf? "When Peter ſtood up in the midſt of them, the number of names was about a hundred and twenty," Acts i. 15. And even theſe were but imperfectly healed: the chief of them being a little before ſo weak in faith, that though they did not, like *Peter*, forſwear their Maſter, yet *they all forſook him and fled.* A plain proof that the ſanctifying *Spirit was not* then *given*, becauſe *Jeſus was not glorified.*

8. It was then when he had "aſcended up on high, and led captivity captive, that the promiſe of the Father was fulfilled, which they had heard from him." It was then he began to work like himſelf, ſhewing that "all power was given to him in heaven and earth. When the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, ſuddenly there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing mighty wind, and there appeared tongues as of fire, and they were filled with the Holy Ghoſt," chap. ii. 1, &c. In conſequence of this, three thouſand ſouls received *medicine to heal their ſickneſs*, were reſtored to the favour and the image of God, under one ſermon of St. *Peter's*, chap. ii. ver. 41. *And the Lord added to them daily* (not *ſuch as ſhould be ſaved*, a manifeſt perverſion of the text, but) *ſuch as were ſaved.* The expreſſion is peculiar; and ſo indeed is the poſition of the words, which run thus, "And the Lord added thoſe that were ſaved, daily to the church." Firſt, *they were ſaved* from the power of ſin: then *they were added* to the aſſembly of the faithful.

9. In order clearly to see, how they were already saved, we need only observe the short account of them, which is recorded in the latter part of the second, and in the fourth chapter. "They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers:" that is, They were daily taught by the Apostles, and had all things common, and daily received the Lord's Supper, and attended all the public service, chap. ii. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," chap. ii. 41. 44, 45. And again. "The multitude of them that believed, (now greatly increased,) were of one heart and of one soul. Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common," chap. iv. 31, 32. And yet again, "Great grace was upon them all; neither was there any among them that lacked. For as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold: and laid it at the Apostles' feet. And distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need," ver. 34, 35.

10. But here a question will naturally occur. How came they to act thus, to have all things in common, seeing we do not read of any positive command to do this? I answer, there needed no outward command: the command was written on their hearts. It naturally and necessarily resulted from the degree of love which they enjoyed. Observe! *They were of one heart, and of one soul: and not so much as one* (so the words run) *said* (They could not, while their hearts so overflowed

flowed with love,) *that any of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own.* And whereſoever the ſame cauſe ſhall prevail, the ſame effect will naturally follow.

11. Here was the dawn of the proper goſpel-day. Here was a proper chriſtian church. It was now *the Sun of righteouſneſs roſe* upon the earth, *with healing in his wings.* He did now *ſave his people from their ſins:* he *healed* all *their ſickneſs.* He not only taught that religion, which is the true *healing of the ſoul,* but effectually planted it in the earth; filling the ſouls of all that believed in him with *righteouſneſs,* gratitude to God and good-will to man, attended with a *peace,* that ſurpaſſed all underſtanding, and with *joy* unſpeakable and full of glory.

12. But how ſoon did *the myſtery of iniquity* work again and obſcure the glorious proſpect! It began to work (not openly indeed, but covertly) in two of the chriſtians, *Annanias and Sapphira: They ſold their poſſeſſion,* like the reſt, and probably for the ſame motive. But afterwards giving place to the devil, and reaſoning with fleſh and blood, they *kept back part of the price.* See the firſt chriſtians, that *made ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience!* The firſt that *drew back to perdition:* inſtead of continuing to *believe to the* final *ſalvation* of the ſoul. Mark the firſt plague which infected the chriſtian church! Namely, The love of money! And will it not be the grand plague in all generations, whenever God ſhall revive the ſame work? O ye believers in Chriſt, take warning! Whether you are yet but *little children,* or *young men,* that *are ſtrong* in the faith. See the ſnare! *Your* ſnare in particular! That which you will be peculiarly

expoſed to, after you have eſcaped from groſs pollutions, *Love* not the world, neither the things of the world. *If any man love the world* whatever he was in times paſt, *the love of the Father is not* now *in him.*

13. However this plague was ſtayed in the firſt chriſtian church by inſtantly cutting off the infected perſons. By that ſignal judgment of God on the firſt offenders, *great fear came upon all*, Acts v. 11. ſo that, for the preſent at leaſt, not one dared to follow their example. Mean time *believers*, men full of faith and love, who rejoiced to have all things in common, "were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," ver. 14.

14. If we enquire in what manner the myſtery of iniquity, the energy of ſatan began to work again in the chriſtian church, we ſhall find it wrought in quite a different way, putting on quite another ſhape. Partiality crept in among the chriſtian believers. Thoſe by whom the diſtribution to every one was made, had reſpect of perſons, largely ſupplying thoſe of their own nation, while the other *widows*, who were not Hebrews, "were neglected in the daily adminiſtration," chap. vi. 1. Diſtribution was not made to them according as every one had need. Here was a manifeſt breach of brotherly love in the *Hebrews*, a ſin both againſt juſtice and mercy: ſeeing the Grecians, as well as the Hebrews, had "ſold all they had, and laid the price at the Apoſtles' feet." See the ſecond plague that broke in upon the chriſtian church! Partiality: reſpect of perſons, too much regard for thoſe of our own ſide, and too little for others, though equally worthy.

15. The

15. The infection did not ſtop here, but one evil produced many more. From partiality in the "Hebrews there aroſe in the Grecians a murmuring among them:" not only diſcontent and reſentful thoughts, but words ſuitable thereto; unkind expreſſions, hard ſpeeches, evil-ſpeaking and backbiting naturally followed. And by the *root of bitterneſs* thus *ſpringing up*, undoubtedly *many were defiled*. The Apoſtles indeed ſoon found out a means of removing the occaſion of this murmuring; yet ſo much of the evil root remained, that God ſaw it needful to uſe a ſeverer remedy. He let looſe the world upon them all, if haply by their ſufferings, by the ſpoiling of their goods, by pain, impriſonment, and death itſelf, he might at once puniſh and amend them. And perſecution, God's laſt remedy for a backſliding people, had the happy effect for which he intended it. Both the partiality of the *Hebrews* ceaſed, and the murmuring of the *Grecians*. And "then had the churches reſt: and were edified," built up in the love of God and one another. "And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, were multiplied," Acts ix. 31.

16. It ſeems to have been ſome time after this, that the myſtery of iniquity began to work in the form of *zeal*. Great troubles aroſe by means of ſome who zealouſly contended for circumciſion and the reſt of the Ceremonial Law, till the Apoſtles and elders put an end to the ſpreading evil, by that final determination, "It ſeemed good unto the Holy Ghoſt, and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than theſe neceſſary things, that ye abſtain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled,

and from fornication," chap. xv. 28, 29. Yet was not this evil so thoroughly suppressed, but that it frequently broke out again, as we learn from various parts of St *Paul's* Epistles, particularly that to the *Galatians*.

17. Nearly allied to this was another grievous evil, which at the same time sprang up in the church, want of mutual forbearance, and of consequence, anger, strife, contention, variance. One very remarkable instance of this, we find in this very chapter. When "Paul said to Barnabas, Let us visit the brethren where we have preached the word, Barnabas determined to take with him John, (because he was) his sister's son. But Paul thought it not good to take him who had deserted them before." And he had certainly reason on his side. But *Barnabas* resolved to have his own way. Καὶ ἐγένετο παροξυσμός, *And there was a fit of anger*. It does not say, on St. *Paul's* side. *Barnabas* only had passion, to supply the want of reason. Accordingly he departed from the work, and went home, while St. *Paul went* forward "through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." ver. 41.

18. The very first society of christians at *Rome* were not altogether free from this evil leaven. There were *divisions and offences* among them also: (chap. xvi. 17.) although in general they seem to have *walked in love*. But how early did the mystery of iniquity work, and how powerfully in the church at *Corinth?* Not only *schisms and heresies*, animosities, fierce and bitter contentions were among them, but open, actual sins; yea, *such fornication as was not named among the heathens*. (1 Cor. v. 1.) Nay, there was need to remind them that *neither adulterers, nor thieves,*

nor

nor drunkards could *enter into the kingdom of heaven*, (chap. vi. 9. 10.) And in all St. *Paul's* Epistles we meet with abundant proof, that tares grew up with the wheat in all the churches; and that the mystery of iniquity did every where in a thousand forms counter-work the mystery of godliness.

19. When St. *James* wrote his Epistle, directed more immediately *to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, to the* converted Jews, the tares sown among his wheat had produced a plentiful harvest. The grand pest of christianity, a faith without works, was spread far and wide filling the church with a wisdom from beneath, which was *earthly, sensual, devilish;* and which gave rise, not only to rash judging and evil-speaking, but to *envy, strife, and every evil work.* Indeed, whoever perules the fourth and fifth chapters of this epistle with serious attention, will be inclined to believe, that even in this early period, the tares had nigh choaked the wheat: and that among most of those to whom St. *James* wrote, no more than the form of godliness, if so much was left.

20. St. *Peter* wrote about the same time, to *the strangers*, the christians *scattered abroad through* all those spacious provinces of *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia (Minor)* and *Bithynia.* These probably were some of the most eminent christians that were then in the world. Yet how exceeding far were even these, from being *without spot or blemish?* And what grievous tares were here also growing up with the wheat? Some of them were "bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," (2 Pet. ii. ver. 1, &c.) And *many followed their pernicious ways,*

ways, of whom the Apoſtle gives that terrible character, They *walk after the fleſh*, in *the luſt of uncleanneſs, like brute beaſts: made to be taken and deſtroyed. Spots they are and blemiſhes, while they feaſt with you* (in the *feaſts of charity*, then celebrated throughout the whole church.) *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot ceaſe from ſin. Theſe are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempeſt, for whom the miſt of darkneſs is reſerved for ever.* And yet theſe very men were called chriſtians. And were even then in the boſom of the church! Nor does the Apoſtle mention them as infeſting any one particular church only; but as a general plague, which even then was diſperſed far and wide among all the chriſtians to whom he wrote.

21. Such is the authentic account of the myſtery of iniquity, working even in the apoſtolic churches! An account given, not by the Jews or Heathens, but by the Apoſtles themſelves. To this we may add the account which is given by the Head and Founder of the church: him *who holds the ſtars in his right hand*, who is *the faithful and true witneſs*. We may eaſily infer what was the ſtate of the church in general, from the ſtate of the ſeven churches in *Aſia*. One of theſe indeed, the church of *Philadelphia*, had "kept his word and had not denied his name," Rev. iii. 8. The church of *Smyrna* was likewiſe in a flouriſhing ſtate: but all the reſt were corrupted more or leſs. Inſomuch that ſeveral of them were not a jot better, than the preſent race of chriſtians: and our Lord then threatened, what he has long ſince performed, to *remove the candleſtick* from them.

22. Such

22. Such was the real ſtate of the chriſtian church, even during the firſt century. While not only St. *John*, but moſt of the Apoſtles were preſent with, and preſided over it. But what a myſtery is this? That the All-wiſe, the All-gracious, the Almighty, ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be! Not in one only, but as far as we can learn, in every chriſtian ſociety, thoſe of *Smyrna* and *Philadelphia* excepted. And how came theſe to be excepted? Why were theſe leſs corrupted (to go no farther) than the other churches of *Aſia*? It ſeems, becauſe they were leſs wealthy. The chriſtians in *Philadelphia* were not literally *increaſed in goods*, like thoſe in *Epheſus* or *Laodicea*: and if the chriſtians at *Smyrna* had acquired more wealth, it was ſwept away by perſecution. So that theſe having leſs of this world's goods, retained more of the ſimplicity and purity of the goſpel.

23. But how contrary is this ſcriptural account of the ancient chriſtians, to the ordinary apprehenſions of men! We have been apt to imagine, that the primitive church, was all excellence and perfection! Anſwerable to that ſtrong deſcription which St. *Peter* cites from *Moſes*: *Ye are a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* And ſuch without all doubt, the firſt chriſtian church which commenced at the day of pentecoſt, was. But how ſoon did the fine gold become dim? How ſoon was the wine mixt with water? How little time elapſed, before the god of this world ſo far regained his empire, that chriſtians in general were ſcarce diſtinguiſhable from heathens, ſave by their opinions and modes of worſhip?

24. And

24. And if the ſtate of the church in the very firſt century was ſo bad, we cannot ſuppoſe it was any better in the ſecond. Undoubtedly it grew worſe and worſe. *Tertullian*, one of the moſt eminent chriſtians of that age, has given us an account of it in various parts of his writings: whence we learn that real, internal religion was hardly found: nay, that not only the *tempers* of the chriſtians were exactly the ſame with thoſe of their heathen neighbours, (pride, paſſion, love of the world reigning alike in both,) but their lives and manners alſo. The bearing a faithful teſtimony againſt the general corruption of chriſtians, ſeems to have raiſed the outcry againſt *Montanus*; and againſt *Tertullian* himſelf, when he was convinced, that the teſtimony of *Montanus* was true. As to the hereſies fathered upon *Montanus*, it is not eaſy to find what they were. I believe his grand hereſy was, the maintaining that *without* inward and outward "holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord."

25. *Cyprian*, biſhop of *Carthage*, in every reſpect an unexceptionable witneſs, who flouriſhed about the middle of the third century, has left us abundance of letters, in which he gives a large and particular account of the ſtate of religion in his time. In reading this, one would be apt to imagine, he was reading an account of the preſent century: ſo totally void of true religion were the generality both of the laity and clergy: ſo immerſed in ambition, envy, covetouſneſs, luxury and all other vices, that the chriſtians of *Africa* were then exactly the ſame as the chriſtians of *England* are now.

26. It is true, that during this whole period, during the firſt three centuries, there were intermixt

mixt longer or ſhorter ſeaſons, wherein true chriſtianity revived. In thoſe ſeaſons the juſtice and mercy of God, let looſe the heathens upon the chriſtians. Many of theſe were then called to reſiſt unto blood. And the blood of the martyrs was the ſeed of the church. The Apoſtolic ſpirit returned: and many "counted not their lives dear unto themſelves, ſo they might finiſh their courſe with joy." Many others were reduced to a happy poverty: and being ſtript of what they had loved too well, they "remembered from whence they were fallen, and repented, and did their firſt works."

27. Perſecution never did, never could give any laſting wound to genuine chriſtianity. But the greateſt it ever received, the grand blow which was ſtruck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the chriſtian law, the whole eſſence of true religion, was ſtruck in the fourth century by *Conſtantine* the Great, when he called himſelf a chriſtian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power upon the chriſtians, more eſpecially upon the clergy. Then was fulfilled in the chriſtian church what *Saluſt* ſays of the people of *Rome*. *Subiatâ imperii æmulâ, non ſenſim ſed præcipiti curſu, à virtutibus deſectum, ad vitia tranſcurſum.* Juſt ſo when the fear of perſecution was removed, and wealth and honour attended the chriſtian profeſſion, the chriſtians did not gradually ſink, but ruſhed headlong into all manner of vices. Then the myſtery of iniquity was no more hid, but ſtalked abroad in the face of the ſun. Then, not the golden, but the iron age of the church commenced: then one might truly ſay,

Protinus

Protinus irrupit venæ prejoris in ævum
Omne nefas; fugêre pudor, verumq; fidesq;
In quorum subiêre locum fraudesq; dolique,
Insidiæque, & vis, & amor sceleratus habendi.

At once in that unhappy age broke in
All wickedness and every deadly sin:
Truth, modesty, and love fled far away,
And force, and thirst of gold claimed universal sway.

28. And this is the event, which most christian expositors mention with such triumph! Yea, which some of them suppose to be typified in the revelation, by *the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!* Rather say, it was the coming of satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the christian, as well as the pagan world, with hardly any control. Historians indeed tell us very gravely, of nations in every century, who were by such and such (*saints* without doubt!) converted to christianity. But still these converts practised all kind of abominations, exactly as they did before: no way differing either in their tempers or in their lives from the nations that were still called heathens. Such has been the deplorable state of the christian church, from the time of *Constantine* till the Reformation. A christian nation, a christian city (according to the scriptural mode) was no where to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.

29. Has the case been altered since the Reformation? Does the mystery of iniquity no longer work

work in the church? No. The Reformation itself has not extended to above one third of the western church. So that two thirds of this remain as they were; so do the eastern, southern, and northern churches. They are as full of heathenish, or worse than heathenish abominations as ever they were before. And what is the condition of the reformed churches? It is certain that they were reformed in their opinions, as well as their modes of worship. But is not this all? Were either their tempers or lives reformed? Not at all. Indeed many of the Reformers themselves complained, that "The Reformation was not carried far enough." But what did they mean? Why, that they did not sufficiently reform the *rites* and *ceremonies* of the church; Ye fools and blind! To fix your whole attention on the circumstantials of religion! Your complaint ought to have been, The essentials of religion were not carried far enough. You ought vehemently to have insisted, on an entire change of men's *tempers* and *lives*: on their shewing, they had "the mind that was in Christ," by "walking as he also walked." Without this how exquisitely trifling was the reformation of opinions and rites and ceremonies? Now let any one survey the state of christianity in the reformed parts of *Switzerland?* In *Germany* or *France?* In *Sweden, Denmark, Holland?* In *Great-Britain* and *Ireland.* How little are any of these reformed christians, better than heathen nations? Have they more communion with God, (although there is no christianity without it)—have they more justice, mercy or truth, than the inhabitants of *China*, or *Indostan?* O no! We must acknowledge

with ſorrow and ſhame, that we are far beneath them!

That we, who by thy name are nam'd,
The heathens unbaptiz'd out-ſin!

30. Is not this the *falling away* or *apoſtacy* from God foretold by St. *Paul* in his ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians? (chap. ii. ver. 3.) Indeed I would not dare to ſay, with *George Fox*, that this apoſtacy was univerſal: that there never were any real chriſtians in the world, from the days of the Apoſtles till his time. But we may boldly ſay, that wherever chriſtianity has ſpread, the apoſtacy has ſpread alſo. Inſomuch that although there are now, and always have been individuals, who were real chriſtians, yet the whole world never did, nor can at this day, ſhew a chriſtian country or city.

31. I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apoſtaſy does not imply the neceſſity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we poſſibly juſtify either the wiſdom or goodneſs of God? According to Scripture, the chriſtian religion was deſigned for *the healing of the nations*; for the ſaving from ſin, by means of the ſecond Adam, all that were *conſtituted ſinners* by the firſt. But it does not anſwer this end: it never did, unleſs for a ſhort time at *Jeruſalem*. What can we ſay, but that if it *has not* yet, it ſurely *will* anſwer it. The time is coming, when not only "all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved, but the fulneſs of the Gentiles will come in." The time cometh, when "violence ſhall no more be heard in the earth, waſting or deſtruction within *our* borders;" but every city ſhall *call* her "walls ſalvation, and her

her gates praiſe:" when the people, ſaith the Lord, "ſhall be all righteous, they ſhall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified," Iſaiah lx. 18. 21.

32. From the preceding conſiderations we may learn the full anſwer to one of the grand objections of infidels againſt chriſtianity, namely, *The lives of chriſtians.* Of chriſtians, do you ſay? I doubt whether you ever knew a *chriſtian* in your life. When *Tomo Chachi*, the Indian chief keenly replied, to thoſe who ſpoke to him of being a chriſtian, "Why theſe are *chriſtians* at *Savannah!* Theſe are *chriſtians* at *Frederica?*" The proper anſwer was, "No, they are not: they are no more chriſtians than you and *Sinauky.*" "But are not theſe chriſtians in *Canterbury*, in *London*, in *Weſtminſter?*" No, no more than they are angels. None are chriſtians, but they that have the mind which was in Chriſt, and walk as he walked. "Why, if theſe only are chriſtians, ſaid an eminent wit, I never ſaw a chriſtian yet." I believe it: you never did. And perhaps you never will. For you will never find them in the grand or the gay world. The few chriſtians that are upon the earth are only to be found, where *you* never look for them. Never therefore urge this objection more: never object to chriſtianity the lives or tempers of heathens. Though they are *called* chriſtians, the name does not imply the thing: they are as far from this as hell from heaven.

33. We may learn from hence, ſecondly, the extent of the fall, the aſtoniſhing ſpread of original corruption. What, among ſo many thouſands, ſo many millions, is there none righteous,

no not one? Not by nature. But including the grace of God, I will not say with the heathen poet,

Rari quippe boni, numero vix totidem quot
Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nili.

As if he had allowed too much, in supposing there were a hundred good men in the Roman empire, he comes to himself, and affirms, there are hardly seven. Nay, surely there were seven thousand? There were so many long ago in one small nation, where *Elijah* supposed there were none at all. But allowing a few exceptions, we are authorized to say, "The whole world lieth in wickedness: yea, in the wicked one" (as the words properly signify.) "Yes, the whole heathen world." Yea, and the christian too, (so called.) For where is the difference, save in a few externals? See with your own eyes. Look into that large country, *Indostan*. There are christians and heathens too. Which have more justice, mercy and truth? The christians or the heathens? Which are most corrupt, infernal, devilish in their tempers and practice? The *English* or the *Indians*? Which have desolated whole countries, and clogged the rivers with dead bodies?

O sacred name of christian! how profan'd!

O earth, earth! how dost thou groan under the villanies of thy *christian* inhabitants!

34. From many of the preceding circumstances we may learn, thirdly, what is the genuine tendency of riches: what a baleful influence they have had in all ages, upon pure and undefiled religion. Not that money is an evil of itself: it is applicable to good as well as bad purposes.

purpoſes. But nevertheleſs it is an undoubted truth, "That the love of money is the root of all evil:" and alſo that the poſſeſſion of riches naturally breeds the love of them. Accordingly it is an old remark,

Creſcit amor nummi, quantum ipſa pecunia creſcit.

"As money increaſes, ſo does the love of it," and always will, without a miracle of grace. Although therefore other cauſes may concur, yet this has been in all ages, the principal cauſe of the decay of true religion in every chriſtian community. As long as the chriſtians in any place were poor, they were devoted to God. While they had little of the world, they did not love the world: but the more they had it, the more they loved it. This conſtrained the lover of their ſouls, at various times to unchain their perſecutors, who by reducing them to their former poverty, reduced them to their former purity. But ſtill remember, riches have in all ages been the bane of genuine chriſtianity.

35. We may learn hence, fourthly, How great watchfulneſs they need, who deſire to be real chriſtians, conſidering what a ſtate the world is in! May not each of them well ſay,

"Into a world of ruffians ſent,
I walk on hoſtile ground:
Wild, human bears on ſlaughter bent,
And rav'ning wolves ſurround."

They are more dangerous, becauſe they commonly appear in ſheep's clothing. Even thoſe who do not pretend to religion, yet make fair profeſſions of good-will, of readineſs to ſerve us, and perhaps of truth and honeſty. But be-

ware of taking their word. Truſt not any man, until he fears God. It is a great truth,

" He that fears no God, can love no friend !"

Therefore ſtand upon your guard againſt every one that is not earneſtly ſeeking to ſave his ſoul. We have need to keep both our heart and mouth as *with a bridle*, *while the ungodly are in* our *ſight*. Their converſation, their ſpirit is infectious, and ſteals upon us unawares, we know not how. *Happy is the man that feareth always* in this ſenſe alſo, leſt he ſhould partake of other men's ſins ! *O keep thyſelf pure ! Watch and pray, that thou enter not into temptation !*

36. We may learn from hence, laſtly, what thankfulneſs becomes thoſe, who have eſcaped the corruption that is in the world, whom God hath choſen out of the world, to be holy and unblamable. " Who is it that maketh thee to differ ? And what haſt thou which thou haſt not received ? Is it not God (alone) who worketh in thee both to will and to do of his good pleaſure ? And let thoſe give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy." Let us praiſe him, that he hath given us to ſee the deplorable ſtate of all that are round about us : to ſee the wickedneſs which overflows the earth, and yet not be borne away by the torrent ! we ſee the general, the almoſt univerſal contagion ; and yet it cannot approach to hurt us ! Thanks be unto Him *who hath delivered us from ſo great a death*, and *doth* ſtill *deliver !* And have we not farther ground for thankfulneſs, yea, and ſtrong conſolation, in the bleſſed hope which God hath given us, that the time is at hand, when

when righteouſneſs ſhall be as univerſal, as unrighteouſneſs is now? Allowing that *the whole creation now groaneth together*, under the ſin of man: our comfort is, it will not always groan: God will ariſe and maintain his own cauſe. And the whole creation ſhall then be delivered both from moral and natural corruption. Sin, and its conſequence pain, ſhall be no more: holineſs and happineſs will cover the earth. Then ſhall all the ends of the world ſee the ſalvation of our God. And the whole race of mankind ſhall know and love and ſerve God, and reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON

SERMON LXIV.

The End of Christ's coming.

1 John iii. 8.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

1. MANY eminent writers, heathen as well as christian, both in earlier and later ages, have employed their utmost labour and art, in painting the beauty of virtue. And the same pains they have taken, to describe, in the liveliest colours, the deformity of vice; both of vice in general, and of those particular vices which were most prevalent in their respective ages and countries. With equal care they have placed in a strong light, the happiness that attends virtue, and the misery which usually accompanies vice, and always follows it. And it may be acknowledged, that treatises of this kind, are not wholly without their use. Probably hereby some on the

one hand have been ſtirred up, to deſire and follow after virtue, and ſome on the other hand, checked in their career of vice; perhaps reclaimed from it, at leaſt for a ſeaſon. But the change effected in men by theſe means, is ſeldom either deep or univerſal. Much leſs is it durable: in a little ſpace, it vaniſhes away as the morning cloud. Such motions are far too feeble to overcome the numberleſs temptations that ſurround us. All that can be ſaid of the beauty and advantage of virtue, and the deformity and ill effects of vice, cannot reſiſt, and much leſs overcome and heal one irregular appetite or paſſion.

" All theſe fences, and their whole array,
One cunning boſom ſin ſweeps quite away."

2. There is therefore an abſolute neceſſity, if ever we would conquer vice, or ſteadily perſevere in the practice of virtue, to have arms of a better kind than theſe, otherwiſe we may *ſee* what is right; but we cannot attain it. Many of the men of reflexion among the very heathens, were deeply ſenſible of this. The language of their heart was that of *Meda:*

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora ſequor.

How exactly agreeing with the words of the Apoſtle, (perſonating a man convinced of ſin, but not yet conquering it) " The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do." The impotence of the human mind, even the *Roman* philoſopher could diſcover. " There is in every man, ſays he, this weakneſs; (he might have ſaid, this ſore diſeaſe,) *Gloriæ ſitis,*

ſitis, thirſt for glory. Nature points out the diſeaſe: but nature ſhews us no remedy."

3. Nor is it ſtrange, that though they ſought for a remedy, yet they found none. For they ſought it, where it never was, and never will be found, namely, in themſelves, in reaſon: in philoſophy: broken reeds! bubbles! ſmoke! They did not ſeek it in God, in whom alone it is poſſible to find it: in God! No, they totally diſclaim this: and that in the ſtrongeſt terms. For although *Cicero*, one of their oracles, once ſtumbled upon that ſtrange truth, *Nemo unquam vir magnus ſine afflatu divino fuit;* (there never was any great man, who was not divinely inſpired.) Yet in the very ſame tract he contradicts himſelf, and totally overthrows his own aſſertion, by aſking, *Quis pro virtute aut ſapientiâ gratias dedit Deis unquam?* Who ever returned thanks to God for his virtue or wiſdom? The *Roman* Poet is, (if poſſible) more expreſs ſtill: who, after mentioning ſeveral outward bleſſings, honeſtly adds,

Hæc ſatis eſt orare Jovem, quæ donatet auſert;
Det vitam, det opes: Æquum mî animum ipſe parabo.

We aſk of God, what he can give or take:
Life, wealth: but virtuous I myſelf will make.

4. The beſt of them either ſought virtue partly from God, or partly from themſelves; or ſought it from thoſe gods, who were indeed but devils, and ſo not likely to make their votaries better than themſelves. So dim was the light of the wiſeſt of men, till "life and immortality were brought to light by the goſpel; till the Son of God

God was manifeſted to deſtroy the works of the devil."

But what are *the works of the devil* here mentioned? How was *the Son of God manifeſted*, to deſtroy them? And, how, in what manner, and by what ſteps, does he actually deſtroy them? Theſe three very important points we may conſider in their order.

I. And firſt, what theſe works of the devil are, we learn from the words preceding and following the text. "We know that he was manifeſted, to take away our ſins," ver. 5. "Whoſoever abideth in him, ſinneth not: whoſoever ſinneth, ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him," ver. 6. "He that committeth ſin is of the devil; for the devil ſinneth from the beginning. For this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil," ver. 8. "Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin." ver. 9. From the whole of this it appears, that *the works of the devil* here ſpoken of, are ſin and the fruits of ſin.

2. But ſince the wiſdom of God has now diſſipated the clouds which ſo long covered the earth, and put an end to the childiſh-conjectures of men, concerning theſe things, it may be of uſe, to take a more diſtinct view of theſe *works of the devil*, ſo far as the oracles of God inſtruct us. It is true, the deſign of the Holy Spirit, was to aſſiſt our faith, not gratify our curioſity. And therefore the account he has given in the firſt chapters of Geneſis, is exceeding ſhort. Nevertheleſs it is ſo clear, that we may learn therefrom whatſoever it concerns us to know.

3. To

3. To take the matter from the beginning, *The Lord God*, (literally *Jehovah, the Gods*; that is, One and three) *created man in his own image*: in his own *natural* image (as to the better part) that is, a Spirit, as God is a Spirit: endued with *understanding*, which if not the essence, seems to be the most essential property of a Spirit. And probably the human spirit, like angelical, then discerned truth by intuition. Hence he named every creature as soon as he saw it according to its inmost nature. Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature: ignorance therefore was inseparable from him. But error was not: it does not appear that he was mistaken in any thing. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it.

4. He was endued also with a *will*, with various affections, (which are only the will exerting itself various ways,) that he might love, desire and delight in that which is good; otherwise his understanding had been to no purpose. He was likewise endued with *liberty*, a power of chusing what was good, and refusing what was not so. Without this, both the will and the understanding would have been utterly useless. Indeed without liberty, man had been so far from being a *free-agent*, that he could have been no *agent* at all. For every *unfree being* is purely passive, not active in any degree. Have you a sword in your hand? Does a man stronger than you seize your hand, and force you to wound a third person? In this you are no agent, any more than the sword: the hand is as passive as the steel. So in every possible case. He that is not free is not an *agent*, but a *patient*.

5. It

5. It seems therefore that every Spirit in the universe, as such, is endued with *understanding*, and in consequence with a will and with a measure of *liberty:* and that these three are inseparably united, in every intelligent nature. And observe: *liberty necessitated*, or over-ruled, is really no liberty at all. It is a contradiction in terms. It is the same as *unfree freedom:* that is, downright nonsense.

6. It may be farther observed, (and it is an important observation,) that where there is no liberty, there can be no moral good or evil, no virtue or vice. The fire warms us, yet it is not capable of virtue; it burns us; yet this is no vice. There is no virtue, but where an intelligent being knows, loves and chuses what is good: nor is there any vice, but where such a being knows, loves and chuses what is evil.

7. And God created man, not only in his *natural*, but likewise in his own *moral* image. He created him not only *in knowledge*, but also in righteousness and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind; so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free agent, he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing he was unspeakably happy, dwelling in God and God in him, having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit. And the continual testimony of his conscience, that all his ways were good and acceptable to God.

8. Yet his liberty, (as was observed before) necessarily included, a power of chusing or refusing either good or evil. Indeed it has been

 doubted,

doubted, whether man could then chuſe evil, knowing it to be ſuch. But it cannot be doubted, he might miſtake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore not impeccable. And this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand queſtion, *Unde Malum?* "How came evil into the world?" It came from *Lucifer, ſon of the morning*: it was the *work of the devil. For the devil*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ſinneth from the beginning*: that is, was the firſt ſinner in the univerſe: the author of ſin; the firſt being, who by the abuſe of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation.

He, "of the firſt,
"If not the firſt Arch-angel,"

was ſelf-tempted to think too highly of himſelf. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way firſt to pride, then to ſelf-will. He ſaid, "I will ſit upon the ſides of the north: I will be like the moſt High." He did not fall alone: but ſoon drew after him a third-part of the ſtars of heaven: in conſequence of which, they loſt their glory and happineſs, and were driven from their former habitation.

9. *Having great wrath*, and perhaps envy at the happineſs of the creatures whom God had newly created, it is not ſtrange, that he ſhould deſire and endeavour to deprive them of it. In order to this, he concealed himſelf in the ſerpent, who was *the moſt ſubtile*, or intelligent, of all the brute creatures, and on that account, the leaſt liable to raiſe ſuſpicion. Indeed ſome have (not improbably) ſuppoſed, that the ſerpent was then endued with reaſon and ſpeech. Had not Eve known he was ſo, would ſhe have admitted

any

any parley with him? Would she not have been frighted, rather than *deceived?* (as the Apostle observes she was.) To deceive her, Satan mingled truth with falsehood: "Hath God said, ye may not eat of every tree of the garden?" And soon after persuaded her to disbelieve God, to suppose his threatning should not be fulfilled. She then lay open to the whole temptation; to *the desire of the flesh;* for the tree was *good for food:* to *the desire of the eyes;* for it was *pleasant to the eyes;* and to *the pride of life;* for it was *to be desired to make one wise,* and consequently honoured. So unbelief begot pride. She thought herself wiser than God, capable of finding a better way to happiness than God had taught her. It begot self-will: she was determined to do her own will, not the will of him, that made her. It begot foolish desires, and compleated all by outward sin: *she took of the fruit and did eat.*

10. She then *gave to her husband and he did eat.* And *in that day,* yea that moment he *died.* The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy: he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him now as an angry judge, *he was afraid.* But how was his understanding darkened, to think he could "hide himself from the presence of the Lord, among the trees of the garden? Thus was his soul utterly dead to God! And in that day his body likewise began to die: became obnoxious to weakness, sickness, pain: all prepa-

ratory to the death of the body, which naturally led to eternal death.

II. Such are "the works of the devil," sin and its fruits, considered in their order and connexion. We are in the second place to consider, How "the Son of God was manifested," in order to destroy them.

1. He was manifested as the only-begotten Son of God, in glory equal with the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven, before and at the foundation of the world. These "morning-stars, sang together," all these "sons of God shouted for joy," when they heard him pronounce, "Let there be light; and there was light;" when he "spread the north over the empty space, and stretched out the heavens as a curtain." Indeed it was the universal belief of the ancient church, that God the Father none hath seen, nor can see: that from all eternity, he hath dwelt in light unapproachable: and it is only in and by the Son of his love, that he hath at any time revealed himself to his creatures.

2. How the Son of God was manifested to our first parents in paradise, it is not easy to determine. It is generally, and not improbably supposed, that he appeared to them in the form of a man, and conversed with them face to face. Not that I can at all believe the ingenious dream of Dr. Watts, concerning "The glorious humanity of Christ," which he supposes to have existed before the world began, and to have been endued with, I know not what astonishing powers. Nay, I look upon this, to be an exceeding dangerous, yea, mischievous hypothesis; as it quite excludes the force of very many scriptures, which have been

been hitherto thought to prove the Godhead of the Son. And I am afraid it was the grand means of turning that great man aside from the faith once delivered to the saints: that is, if he was turned aside, if that beautiful soliloquy be genuine, which is printed among his posthumous works, wherein he so earnestly beseeches the Son of God, not to be displeased, "Because he cannot believe him to be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father."

3. May we not reasonably believe it was by similar appearances that he was manifested in succeeding ages, to Enoch, while he walked with God; to Noah, before and after the deluge; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on various occasions; and to mention no more, to Moses. This seems to be the natural meaning of the word; "My servant Moses is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of Jehovah shall he behold," namely the Son of God.

4. But all these were only types of his grand manifestation. It was in the fulness of time (in just the middle age of the world, as a great man largely proves,) that God "brought his first-begotten into the world, made of a woman," by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. He was afterwards manifested to the shepherds; to devout Simeon; to Anna the prophetess; and to "all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem."

5. When he was of due age for executing his priestly office, he was manifested to Israel, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, in every town, and in every city." And for a time he was glorified by all, who acknowledged, that

he "ſpake as never man ſpake;" that he "ſpake as one having authority," with all the wiſdom of God, and the power of God. He was manifeſted by numberleſs "ſigns and wonders, and mighty works which he did:" as well as by his whole life, being the only one born of a woman "who knew no ſin;" who from his birth to his death, "did all things well," doing continually "not his own will, but the will of him that ſent him."

6. After all, "behold the Lamb of God, taking away the ſin of the world!" This was a more glorious manifeſtation of himſelf, than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he manifeſted to angels and men, when he "was wounded for our tranſgreſſions," when he "bore all our ſins in his own body on the tree:" when, having by that one oblation of himſelf once offered, made a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world, he cried out, "It is finiſhed: and bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt." We need but juſt mention thoſe farther manifeſtations, his reſurrection from the dead, his aſcenſion into heaven, into the glory which he had before the world began; and his pouring out the Holy Ghoſt, on the day of Pentecoſt: both of which are beautifully deſcribed in thoſe well-known words of the Pſalmiſt: "He hath aſcended up on high; he hath led captivity captive; he hath received gifts for men: yea, even for his enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among, or in them."

7. That the Lord God might dwell in them: This refers to a yet farther manifeſtation of the Son of God, even his inward manifeſtation of himſelf. When he ſpoke of this to his Apoſtles, but

but a little before his death, one of them immediately asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" By enabling us to believe in his name. For he is then inwardly manifested to us, when we are enabled to say with confidence, "My Lord, and my God!" Then each of us can boldly say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. And it is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts, that he effectually "destroys the works of the devil."

III. 1. How he does this, in what manner, and by what steps he does actually destroy them, we are now to consider. And first, as Satan began his first work in Eve, by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man, by enabling us to believe in him. He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Out of darkness he commands light to shine, and takes away the veil which the god of this world had spread over our hearts. And we then see, not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses, not imputing them to *me*." In that day "we know that we are of God," children of God by faith, "having redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" that peace which enables us in every state, therewith to be content; which delivers us from all perplexing doubts, from all tormenting fears;

fears; and in particular from that "fear of death, whereby we were all our life-time ſubject to bondage."

2. At the ſame time the Son of God ſtrikes at the root of that grand work of the devil, pride: cauſing the ſinner to humble himſelf before the Lord, to abhor himſelf as it were in duſt and aſhes. He ſtrikes at the root of ſelf-will, enabling the humbled ſinner to ſay in all things, *Not as I will*, but as thou wilt. He deſtroys the love of the world, delivering them that believe in him from "every fooliſh and hurtful deſire; from the deſire of the fleſh, the deſire of the eyes, and the pride of life." He ſaves them from ſeeking, or expecting to find happineſs in any creature. As Satan turned the heart of man, from the Creator to the creature; ſo the Son of God turns his heart back again, from the creature to the Creator. Thus it is, by manifeſting himſelf, he deſtroys the works of the devil, reſtoring the guilty outcaſt from God, to his favour, to pardon and peace, the ſinner in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holineſs; the burdened, miſerable ſinner, to joy unſpeakable, to real, ſubſtantial happineſs.

3. But it may be obſerved, that the Son of God does not deſtroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet deſtroy bodily weakneſs, ſickneſs, pain and a thouſand infirmities incident to fleſh and blood. He does not deſtroy all that weakneſs of underſtanding which is the natural conſequence of the ſouls dwelling in a corruptible body: ſo that ſtill

"Humanum eſt errare & neſcire:"

Both

Both ignorance and error belong to humanity. He entrusts with only an exceeding small share of knowledge in our present state, lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods. It is to remove from us all temptations to pride, and all thought of independency, (which is the very thing that men in general so earnestly covet, under the name of *liberty*) that he leaves us encompast with all these infirmities, particularly weakness of understanding, till the sentence takes place, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

4. Then error, pain, and all bodily infirmities cease: all these are destroyed by death. And death itself, *the last enemy* of man, shall be destroyed at the resurrection. The moment that we hear the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, *Then shall be fulfilled the* saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. This corruptible *body* shall put on incorruption; this mortal *body* shall put on immortality:" and the Son of God manifested in the clouds of heaven, shall destroy this last work of the devil.

5. Here then we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: a restoration of man, by him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of: a restoration not only to the favour, but likewise to the image of God; implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God. It is plain, if we attend to the preceding considerations, that nothing short of this is christian religion. Every thing else, whether negative or external, is utterly wide of the mark.

But

But what a paradox is this! How little is it understood in the christian world? yea, in this enlightened age, wherein it is taken for granted, the world is wiser than ever it was from the beginning. Among all our discoveries, who has discovered this? How few, either among the learned or unlearned? And yet, if we believe the Bible, who can deny it? Who can doubt of it? It runs through the Bible, from the beginning to the end, in one connected chain. And the agreement of every part of it with every other, is properly the *analogy* of *faith*. Beware of taking any thing else, or any thing less than this for religion. Not any thing else: do not imagine an *outward form*, a round of duties, both in public and private, is religion. Do not suppose, that honesty, justice, and whatever is called *morality*, (though excellent in its place,) is religion. And least of all dream that orthodoxy, right opinion, (vulgarly called *faith*,) is religion. Of all religious dreams, this is the vainest which takes hay and stubble, for gold tried in the fire!

6. O do not take any thing less than this for the religion of Jesus Christ! Do not take part of it for the whole. What God hath joined together, put not asunder. Take no less for his religion, than "the faith that worketh by love" all inward and outward holiness. Be not content with any religion which does not imply the destruction of all the works of the devil, that is, of all sin. We know, weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities will remain, while this corruptible body remains. But sin need not remain: this is that work of the devil, eminently so called, which the Son of God was manifested

to

to deſtroy in this preſent life. He is able, he is willing to deſtroy it now, in all that believe in him. Only be not ſtraitened in your bowels! Do not diſtruſt his power or his love! Put his promiſe to the proof! He hath ſpoken: and is he not ready likewiſe to perform? Only "come boldly to the throne of grace," truſting in his mercy: and you ſhall find, "He ſaveth to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God through him!"

SERMON

SERMON LXV.

The general Spread of the Gospel.

Isaiah xi. 9.

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

1. IN what a condition is the world at present? How does darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it, cover the face of the earth! From the accurate enquiry made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. *Brerewood*, (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form a more exact judgment,) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are professed heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ, as if he had never come into the world. Six of the remaining parts are professed Mahometans: so that only five in thirty are so much as nominally christians!

2. And

2. And let it be remembered that ſince this computation was made, many new nations have been diſcovered: numberleſs iſlands, particularly in the South Sea, large and well-inhabited. But by whom? By heathens of the baſeſt ſort, many of them inferior to the beaſts of the field. Whether they eat men or no (which indeed I cannot find any ſufficient ground to believe) they certainly kill all that fall into their hands. They are therefore more ſavage than lions, who kill no more creatures, than are neceſſary to ſatisfy their preſent hunger. See the real dignity of human nature? Here it appears in its genuine purity: not polluted either by thoſe "general corrupters, kings," or by the leaſt tincture of religion! What will Abbè *Reſnal* (that determined enemy to monarchy and revelation) ſay to this?

3. A little, and but a little above the heathens in religion are the Mahometans. But how far and wide has this miſerable deluſion ſpread over the face of the earth? Inſomuch that the Mahometans are conſiderably more in number, (as ſix to five) than chriſtians. And by all the accounts which have any pretence to authenticity, theſe are alſo in general, as utter ſtrangers to all true religion, as their four-footed brethren. As void of mercy as lions and tygers, as much given up to brutal luſts as bulls or goats: ſo that they are in truth a diſgrace to human nature, and a plague to all that are under their iron yoke.

4. It is true, a celebrated writer (Lady *Mary Wortly M.*) gives a different character of them. With the fineſt flow of words, in the moſt elegant language, ſhe labours to waſh the Æthiop white. She repreſents them as many degrees

above the christians, as some of the most amiable people in the world, as possest of all the social virtues, as some of the most accomplished of men. But I can in no wise receive her report: I cannot rely upon her authority. I believe those round about her had just as much religion as their admirer had, when she was admitted into the interior parts of the Grand Signior's Seraglio. Notwithstanding therefore all that such a witness does or can say in their favour, I believe the Turks in general are little, if at all, better than the generality of the Heathens.

5. And little, if at all, better than the Turks, are the Christians in the Turkish dominions, even the best of them, those that live in the *Morea*, or are scattered up and down in *Asia*. The more numerous bodies of *Georgian*, *Circassian*, *Mengrelian* Christians, are a proverb of reproach to the Turks themselves: not only for their deplorable ignorance, but for their total, stupid, barbarous irreligion.

6. From the most authentic accounts we can obtain of the Southern Christians, those in *Abyssinia*, and of the Northern Churches, under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of *Moscow*, we have reason to fear they are much in the same condition both with regard to knowledge and religion, as those in *Turkey*. Or if those in *Abyssinia* are more civilized and have a larger share of knowledge, yet they do not appear to have any more religion, than either the Mahometans or Pagans.

7. The Western Churches seem to have the pre-eminence over all these in many respects. They have abundantly more knowledge: they have more scriptural and more rational modes of worship. Yet two-thirds of them are still involved

volved in the corruptions of the Church of Rome: and moſt of theſe are entirely unacquainted with either the theory or practice of religion. And as to thoſe who are called Proteſtants or Reformed, what acquaintance with it have they! Put Papiſts and Proteſtants, *French* and *Engliſh* together, the bulk of one, and of the other nation: and what manner of Chriſtians are they? Are they *holy, as he that hath called them is holy?* Are they filled with *righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt?* Is there *that mind in them which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus?* And do they *walk as Chriſt alſo walked?* Nay, they are as far from it as hell is from heaven.

8. Such is the preſent ſtate of mankind, in all parts of the world! But how aſtoniſhing is this, if there is a God in heaven? And if his eyes are over all the earth! Can he deſpiſe the work of his own hand? Surely this is one of the greateſt myſteries under heaven! How is it poſſible to reconcile this with either the wiſdom or goodneſs of God? And what can give eaſe to a thoughtful mind, under ſo melancholy a proſpect? What but the conſideration, that things will not always be ſo; that another ſcene will ſoon be opened. God will be jealous of his honour: he will ariſe and maintain his own cauſe. He will judge the prince of this world, and ſpoil him of his uſurped dominion. He will "give (his Son) the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion. The earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the ſea." The loving knowledge of God producing uniform, uninterrupted holineſs and happineſs, ſhall cover the earth, ſhall fill every ſoul of man.

9. "Impoſſible! will ſome men ſay. Yea, the greateſt of all impoſſibilities! That we ſhould ſee a chriſtian world! Yea, a chriſtian nation, or city! How can theſe things be?" On one ſuppoſition indeed not only all impoſſibility, but all difficulty vaniſhes away. Only ſuppoſe the Almighty to act *irreſiſtibly*, and the thing is done: yea, with juſt the ſame eaſe, as when *God ſaid, Let there be light; and there was light* But then, man would be man no longer: his inmoſt nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the ſun or the wind, as he would no longer be endued with liberty, a power of chuſing or ſelf-determination. Conſequently, he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or puniſhment.

10. But ſetting aſide this clumſy way of cutting the knot, which we are not able to untie: how can all men be made holy and happy, while they continue men? While they ſtill enjoy both the underſtanding, the affections, and the liberty which are eſſential to a moral agent? There ſeems to be a plain, ſimple way of removing this difficulty, without entangling ourſelves in any ſubtle, metaphyſical diſquiſitions. As God is One, ſo the work of God is uniform in all ages. May we not then conceive, how he *will* work on the ſouls of men in times to come, by conſidering how he *does* work *now?* And how he *has* wrought in times paſt?

11. Take one inſtance of this, and ſuch an inſtance as you cannot eaſily be deceived in. You know how God wrought in *your own* ſoul, when he firſt enabled you to ſay, *The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved* me, *and gave himſelf for* me. He did not take away your underſtanding,

underſtanding, but enlightened and ſtrengthened it. He did not deſtroy any of your affections: rather they were more vigorous than before. Leaſt of all did he take away your liberty, your power of chuſing good or evil: he did not *force* you; but being *aſſiſted* by his grace, you like Mary, *choſe* the better part. Juſt ſo has he *aſſiſted* five in one houſe to make that happy *choice*: fifty or five hundred in one city, and many thouſands in a nation, without depriving any of them of that liberty, which is eſſential to a moral agent.

12. Not that I deny that there are exempt caſes, wherein

"The o'erwhelming power of ſaving grace"

does for a time work as irreſiſtibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I ſpeak of God's general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable inſtances; perhaps more within fifty years laſt paſt, than any one in *England* or in *Europe*. And with regard even to theſe exempt cates: although God does work irreſiſtibly *for the time* yet I do not believe there is any human ſoul, in which God works irreſiſtibly *at all times*. Nay, I am fully perſuaded there is not. I am perſuaded, there are no men living that have not many times *reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt*, and *made void the counſel of God againſt themſelves*. Yea, I am perſuaded, every child of God has had at ſome time, *life and death ſet before him*, eternal life, and eternal death, and has in himſelf the caſting voice. So true is that well-known ſaying of St. *Auſtin*, (one of the nobleſt he ever uttered) *Qui fecit nos ſine nobis, non ſalvabit nos ſine nobis*: he that made us *without ourſelves*, will not ſave us *without ourſelves*. Now in the ſame

manner as God *has* converted so many to himself, without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world. And it is as easy to him to convert a world, as one individual soul.

13. Let us observe what God has done already.

Between fifty and sixty years ago God raised up a few young men in the University of *Oxford*, to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to,

That without holiness no man shall see the Lord:

That this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do:

That he doth it of his own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ.

That this holiness is the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as he also walked:

That no man can be thus sanctified till he is justified: and

That we are justified by faith alone. These great truths they declared on all occasions in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.

14. From *Oxford*, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more *found redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins*. They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into *North Britain* and

and *Ireland*, and a few years after, into *New York*, *Pennſylvania*, and many other provinces in *America*, even as high as *Newfoundland*, and *Nova Scotia*. So that although at firſt this *grain of muſtard ſeed* was *the leaſt of all the ſeeds*, yet in a few years it grew into a *large tree, and put forth great branches*.

15. Generally when theſe truths, juſtification by faith in particular, were declared in any large town, after a few days or weeks, there came ſuddenly on the great congregation, not in a corner (at *London*, *Briſtol*, *Newcaſtle upon Tyne* in particular) a violent and impetuous power which

> " Like mighty wind or torrent fierce,
> Did then oppoſers all o'er run."

And this frequently continued, with ſhorter or longer intervals, for ſeveral weeks or months. But it gradually ſubſided, and then the work of God was carried on by gentle degrees: while that Spirit, in watering the ſeed that had been ſown, in confirming and ſtrengthening them that had believed,

> " Deigned his influence to infuſe,
> Secret, refreſhing as the ſilent dews."

And this difference in his uſual manner of working, was obſervable not only in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, but in every part of *America*, from South to North, wherever the word of God came with power.

16. Is it not then highly probable, that God will carry on his work in the ſame manner as he has begun? That he *will* carry it on, I cannot doubt; however *Luther* may affirm, that a revival

vival of religion never lasts above a generation, that is, thirty years; (whereas the present revival has already continued above fifty.) Or however prophets of evil may say, "All will be at an end, when the first instruments are removed." There will then very probably be a great shaking: but I cannot induce myself to think, that God has wrought so glorious a work, to let it sink and die away in a few years, no, I trust, this is only the beginning of a far greater work: the dawn of *the latter day glory*.

17. And is it not probable, I say, that he will carry it on, in the same manner as he has begun? At the first breaking out of this work in this or that place, there may be a shower, a torrent of grace: and so at some other particular seasons, which *the Father has reserved in his own power*. But in general, it seems the kingdom of God will not *come with observation*, but will silently increase wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another. May it not thus spread, first though the remaining provinces, then through the isles of *North America*? And at the same time from *England* to *Holland*? Where there is already a blessed work in *Utrecht*, *Harlem*, and many other cities? Probably it will spread from these to the Protestants in *France*, to those in *Germany*, and those in *Switzerland*. Then to *Sweden*, *Denmark*, *Russia*, and all the other Protestant nations in *Europe*.

18. May we not suppose that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion, of the experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will afterwards spread to the *Roman Catholics*, in *Great Britain*, *Ireland*, *Holland*;

Holland; in *Germany*, *France*, *Switzerland*, and in all other countries, where Romaniſts and Proteſtants live intermixt, and familiarly converſe with each other? Will it not then be eaſy for the wiſdom of God, to make a way for religion, in the life and power thereof, into thoſe countries that are merely Popiſh, as *Italy*, *Spain*, *Portugal*? And may it not be gradually diffuſed from thence, to all that name the name of Chriſt, in the various provinces of *Turkey*, in *Abyſſinia*, yea and in the remoteſt parts, not only of *Europe*, but of *Aſia*, *Africa*, and *America*?

19. And in every nation under heaven, we may reaſonably believe God will obſerve the ſame order which he hath done from the beginning of Chriſtianity. *They ſhall all know* me, ſaith *the Lord*, not from the greateſt to the leaſt: (this is that wiſdom of the world, which is fooliſhneſs with God.) but *from the leaſt to the greateſt*, that the praiſe may not be of men, but of God. Before the end, even the rich ſhall enter into the kingdom of God. Together with them will enter into the great, the noble, the honourable; yea, the rulers, the princes, the kings of the earth. Laſt of all the wiſe and learned, the men of genius, the philoſophers will be convinced that they are fools, will *be converted and become as little children, and enter into the kindom of God.*

20. Then ſhall be fully accompliſhed to *the houſe of Iſrael*, the ſpiritual Iſrael, of whatever people or nation, that gracious promiſe, "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they ſhall be to me a people. And they ſhall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother; ſaying, know the Lord; for they ſhall

ſhall all know me, from the leaſt to the greateſt. For I will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſs, and their ſins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Then ſhall "the times of (univerſal) refreſhment come from the preſence of the Lord." The grand pentecoſt ſhall *fully come:* and *devout men* in *every nation under heaven*, however diſtant in place from each other, ſhall *all be filled with the Holy Ghoſt*. And they will "continue ſteadfaſt in the Apoſtle's doctrine, and in the fellowſhip and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." They will "eat their meat, (and do all that they have to do,) with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart." *Great grace* will be *upon them all:* and they will be *all of one heart and of one ſoul.* The natural, neceſſary conſequence of this will be the ſame as it was in the beginning of the Chriſtian Church. *None of them* will *ſay*, that *ought of the things which he poſſeſſes is his own, but they* will *have all things common. Neither will there be any among them that want; for as many as are poſſeſſed of lands or houſes will ſell them, and diſtribution* will be *made to every man, according as he has need.* All their deſires, mean time, and paſſions, and tempers will be caſt in one mould, while all are doing the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven. All their *converſation will be ſeaſoned with ſalt*, and will *miniſter grace to the hearers*, ſeeing it will not be ſo much they that ſpeak, *as the Spirit of their Father that ſpeaketh in them.* And there will be no *root of bitterneſs ſpringing up*, either to *defile* or trouble them. There will be no Ananias or Sapphira, to bring back the curſed love of money among them. There will be no partiality: no *widows neglected in the daily miniſtration.* Conſequently there will be no temptation,

tion, to any *murmuring* thought or unkind word of one againſt another, while,

> " They all are of one heart and ſoul,
> And only love informs the whole."

21. The grand ſtumbling-block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely the lives of the Chriſtians, the *Mahometans* will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words. And as their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power, thoſe of them that fear God, will ſoon take knowledge of the ſpirit whereby the Chriſtians ſpeak. They will *receive with meekneſs the engrafted word*, and will bring forth fruit with patience. From them the leaven will ſoon ſpread to thoſe who till then had no fear of God before their eyes. Obſerving, " the Chriſtian dogs," as they uſed to term them, to have changed their nature, to be ſober, temperate, juſt, benevolent, and that in ſpite of all provocations to the contrary, from admiring their lives, they will ſurely be led, to conſider and embrace their doctrine. And then the Saviour of ſinners will ſay, " The hour is come. I will glorify my Father. I will ſeek and ſave the ſheep that were wandering on the dark mountains. Now will I avenge myſelf of my enemy, and pluck the prey out of the lion's teeth. I will reſume my own for ages loſt: I will claim the purchaſe of my blood." So he will go forth in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, and all his enemies ſhall flee before him. All the prophets of lies ſhall vaniſh away, and all the nations that had followed them, ſhall acknowledge the Great Prophet of the Lord, *mighty in word and*

and deed: and *ſhall honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

22. And then the grand ſtumbling-block being removed from the *Heathen* nations alſo, the ſame ſpirit will be poured out upon them, even thoſe that remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea. The poor *American* ſavage will no more aſk, "What are the Chriſtians better than us?" When they ſee their ſteady practice of univerſal temperance, and of juſtice, mercy and truth. The *Malabarian* Heathen will have no more room to ſay, "Chriſtian man take my wife. Chriſtian man much drink: Chriſtian man kill man! *Devil-Chriſtian!* Me no Chriſtian." Rather, ſeeing how far the Chriſtians exceed their own countrymen, in whatſoever things are lovely and of good report, they will adopt a very different language, and ſay, *Angel-Chriſtian!* The holy lives of the Chriſtians will be an argument they will not know how to reſiſt: ſeeing the Chriſtians ſteadily and uniformly practiſe what is agreeable to the law written in their own hearts, their prejudices will quickly die away, and they will gladly receive *the truth as it is in Jeſus.*

23. We may reaſonably believe, that the Heathen nations which are mingled with the Chriſtians, and thoſe that bordering upon Chriſtian nations, have conſtant and familiar intercourſe with them, will be ſome of the firſt who learn to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth: thoſe for inſtance that live on the continent of *America*, or in the iſlands that have received colonies from *Europe*. Such are likewiſe all thoſe inhabitants of the Eaſt Indies that adjoin to any of the Chriſtian ſettlements. To theſe may be added, numerous tribes of *Tartars*, the heathen parts of the

the *Ruſſias*, and the inhabitants of *Norway*, *Finland*, and *Lapland*. Probably theſe will be followed, by thoſe more diſtant nations with whom the Chriſtians trade: to whom they will impart what is of infinitely more value than earthly pearls, or gold and ſilver. The God of love will then prepare his Meſſengers and make a way into the polar regions, into the deepeſt receſſes of *America*, and into the interior parts of *Africa*: yea, into the heart of *China* and *Japan*, with the countries adjoining them. And *their ſound* will then *go forth into all lands, and their voice to the ends of the earth.*

24. But one conſiderable difficulty ſtill remains. There are very many heathen nations in the world, that have no intercourſe, either by trade or any other means with Chriſtians of any kind. Such are the inhabitants of the numerous iſlands of the South Sea, and probably in all large branches of the Ocean. Now what ſhall be done for theſe poor outcaſts of men? *How ſhall they believe*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *in him whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear, without a preacher?* You may add, *And how ſhall they preach, unleſs they be ſent?* Yea, but is not God able to ſend them? Cannot he raiſe them up, as it were out of the ſtones? And can he ever want means of ſending them? No: were there no other means, he can *take them by his Spirit* (as he did *Ezekiel*, chap. ii. 12.) or by *his Angel*, (as he did *Philip*, Acts viii.) and ſet them down whereſoever it pleaſeth him. Yea, he can find out a thouſand ways, to fooliſh man unknown. And he ſurely will: for heaven and earth may paſs away; but his word ſhall not paſs away. He

will "give his Son the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion."

25. "And ſo all Iſrael too ſhall be ſaved." For "blindneſs has happened to Iſrael," (as the great Apoſtle obſerves, Romans xi. 25, &c.) till the fulneſs of the "Gentiles be come in." Then "the Deliverer that cometh out of Sion, ſhall turn away iniquity from Jacob. God hath now concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all." Yea, and he will ſo have mercy upon all Iſrael, as to give them all temporal, with all ſpiritual bleſſings. For this is the promiſe, "For the Lord thy God will gather thee from all nations, whither the Lord thy God hath ſcattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers poſſeſſed, and thou ſhalt poſſeſs it. And the Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul." Deut. xxx. 3. Again, "I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them: and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cauſe them to dwell ſafely. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear into their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me. And I will plant them in this land aſſuredly, with all my heart and with all my ſoul." Jeremiah xxxii. 37, &c.

Yet again: "I will take you from among the heathen; and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean: from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols will I cleanſe you. And ye ſhall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye ſhall be

be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel xxxvi. 24, &c.

26. At that time will be accompliſhed, all thoſe glorious promiſes made to the Chriſtian Church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth. "They ſhall not hurt, nor deſtroy in all my holy mountain." Iſaiah xi. 9. "Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, waſting nor deſtruction within thy borders; but thou ſhalt call thy walls ſalvation, and thy gates, praiſe." Thou ſhalt be encompaſt on every ſide with ſalvation, and all that go through thy gates ſhall praiſe God. "The ſun ſhall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightneſs ſhall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord ſhall be an everlaſting light, and thy God thy glory." The light of the ſun and moon ſhall be ſwallowed up in the light of his countenance ſhining upon thee. "Thy people alſo ſhall be righteous; the work of my hands that I may be glorified. As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden cauſeth the things that are ſown in it to ſpring forth; ſo the Lord God will cauſe righteouſneſs and praiſe to ſpring forth before all the nations." Iſaiah lxii. 14, &c.

27. This I apprehend to be the anſwer, yea, the only full and ſatisfactory anſwer that can be given, to the objection againſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, taken from the preſent ſtate of the world. It will not always be thus: theſe things are only permitted for a ſeaſon, by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immenſe, eternal good out of this temporary evil. This is the very key which the Apoſtle himſelf gives us in the words above recited, "God hath

concluded them all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all!" In view of this glorious event, how well may we cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" although for a season "his judgments were unsearchable, and his ways past finding out," Romans xi. 32, 33. It is enough, we are assured of this one point, that all these transient evils will issue well; will have a happy conclusion, and that

"Mercy first and last will reign."

All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, That he is already renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope, that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus: that he will never intermit this blessed work of his spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises: until he hath put a period to sin and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever!" Rev. vii. 12.

SERMON

SERMON LXVI.

THE NEW CREATION.

REVELATION xxi. 5.

Behold, I make all things new.

1. WHAT a ſtrange ſcene is here opened to our view! How remote from all our natural apprehenſions! Not a glimpſe of what is here revealed, was ever ſeen in the heathen world. Not only the modern, barbarous, uncivilized heathens have not the leaſt conception of it; but it was equally unknown to the refined, poliſhed heathens of antient Greece and Rome. And it is almoſt as little thought of or underſtood, by the generality of Chriſtians: I mean, not barely thoſe that are nominally ſuch, that have the form of godlineſs without the power; but even thoſe that in a meaſure fear God and ſtudy to work righteouſneſs.

2. It muſt be allowed, that after all the reſearches we can make, ſtill our knowledge of the

great truth, which is delivered to us in these words, is exceedingly short and imperfect. As this is a point of mere revelation, beyond the reach of all our natural faculties, we cannot penetrate far into it, nor form any adequate conception of it. But it may be an encouragement to those who have in any degree tasted of the powers of the world to come, to go as far as they can go, interpreting scripture by scripture, according to the analogy of faith.

3. The Apostle, caught up in the visions of God, tells us in the first verse of the chapter, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." And adds, ver. 5, "He that sat upon the throne said (I believe the only words which he is said to utter throughout the whole book,) "Behold, I make all things new."

4. Very many commentators entertain a strange opinion, that this relates only to the present state of things, and gravely tell us, that the words are to be referred to the flourishing state of the church, which commenced after the heathen persecutions. Nay, some of them have discovered, that all which the Apostle speaks concerning the *new heaven and the new earth*, was fulfilled when *Constantine the Great* poured in riches and honours upon the Christians. What a miserable way is this of making void the whole counsel of God, with regard to all that grand chain of events, in reference to his church, yea, and to all mankind, from the time that John was in Patmos, unto the end of the world! Nay the line of this prophecy reaches farther still. It does not end with the present world, but shews us the things that will come to pass, when this world is no more. For

5. Thus

5. Thus ſaith the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, "Behold I make all things new:" all which are included in that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, "A new heaven, and a new earth. A new heaven." The original word in Geneſis (chap. 1.) is in the plural number. And indeed this is the conſtant language of Scripture; not *heaven*, but *heavens*. Accordingly the antient Jewiſh writers are accuſtomed to reckon three heavens. In conformity to which, the Apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of his being "caught up into the third heaven." It is this, the third heaven, which is uſually ſuppoſed to be the more immediate reſidence of God. So far as any reſidence can be aſcribed to his omnipreſent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole univerſe. It is here (if we ſpeak after the manner of men,) that the Lord ſitteth upon his throne, ſurrounded by angels and archangels, and by all his flaming miniſters.

6. We cannot think, that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its great inhabitant. Surely this palace of the Moſt High was the ſame from eternity, and will be world without end. Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the higheſt of which we uſually call the ſtarry heavens. This, St. *Peter* informs us, "is reſerved unto fire, againſt the day of judgment, and deſtruction of ungodly men." In that day, *being on fire*, it ſhall firſt *ſhrivel as a parchment ſcroll*: then it ſhall *be diſſolved*, and *ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe*: laſtly, it ſhall "flee from the face of him that ſitteth upon the throne, and there ſhall be found no place for it."

7. At the ſame time "the ſtars ſhall fall from heaven,"

heaven," the ſecret chain being broken, which had retained them in their ſeveral orbits, from the foundation of the world. In the mean while the lower, or ſublunary *heaven*, with *the elements* (or principles that compoſe it) "ſhall melt with fervent heat," while "the earth, with the works that are therein ſhall be burned up." This is the introduction to a far nobler ſtate of things, ſuch as it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive: the univerſal reſtoration which is to ſucceed the univerſal deſtruction. "For we look for," ſays the Apoſtle, "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs," 2 Pet. iii. 7, &c.

8. One conſiderable difference there will undoubtedly be in the ſtarry heaven, when it is created anew; there will be no blazing ſtars, no comets there. Whether thoſe horrid, eccentric orbs, are half-formed planets, in a chaotic ſtate, (I ſpeak on the ſuppoſition of a plurality of worlds) or ſuch as have undergone their general conflagration, they will certainly have no place in the new heaven, where all will be exact order and harmony. There may be many other differences between the heaven that now is, and that which will be after the renovation. But they are above our apprehenſion: we muſt leave eternity to explain them.

9. We may more eaſily conceive the changes which will be wrought in the lower heaven, in the region of the air. It will be no more torn by hurricanes, or agitated by furious ſtorms or deſtructive tempeſts. Pernicious or terrifying meteors will have no more place therein. We ſhall have no more occaſion to ſay,

"There

"There like a trumpet, loud and ſtrong,
Thy thunder ſhakes our coaſt:
While the red lightnings wave along,
The banners of thy hoſt!"

No: all will then be light, fair, ſerene: a lively picture of the eternal day.

10. All the elements (taking that word in the common ſenſe, for the principles of which all natural beings are compounded) will be new indeed; entirely changed as to their qualities, although not as to their nature. *Fire* is at preſent the general deſtroyer of all things under the ſun; diſſolving all things that come within the ſphere of its action, and reducing them to their primitive atoms. But no ſooner will it have performed its laſt great office of deſtroying the heavens and the earth, (whether you mean thereby one ſyſtem only, or the whole fabric of the univerſe: the difference between one and millions of worlds being nothing before the great Creator.) When, I ſay, it has done this, the deſtructions wrought by fire, will come to a perpetual end. It will deſtroy no more, it will conſume no more; it will forget its power to burn, which it poſſeſſes only during the preſent ſtate of things, and be as harmleſs in the new heavens and earth, as it is now in the bodies of men and other animals, and the ſubſtance of trees and flowers: in all which (as late experiments ſhow) large quantities of ethereal fire are lodged: if it be not rather an eſſential component part of every material being under the ſun. But it will probably retain its vivifying power, though diveſted of its power to deſtroy.

11. It

11. It has been already obſerved, that the calm placid *air*, will be no more diſturbed by ſtorms and tempeſts. There will be no more meteors, with their horrid glare, affrighting the poor children of men. May we not add (though at firſt it may ſound like a paradox) that there will be no more rain. It is obſervable, that there was none in paradiſe: a circumſtance which *Moſes* particularly mentions, (Gen. ii. ver. 5, 6.) "The Lord God had not cauſed it to rain upon the earth. But there went up a miſt from the earth," which then covered up the abyſs of waters, "and watered the whole face of the ground," with moiſture ſufficient for all the purpoſes of vegetation. We have all reaſon to believe, that the caſe will be the ſame when paradiſe is reſtored. Conſequently there will be no clouds or fogs: but one bright, refulgent day. Much leſs will there be any poiſonous damps or peſtilential blaſts. There will be no Sirocco in *Italy*, no parching or ſuffocating winds in *Arabia*: no keen North-Eaſt winds in our own country,

"Shattering the graceful locks of yon fair trees;

but only pleaſing, healthful breezes,

"Fanning the earth with odoriferous wings."

12. But what a change will the element of *water* undergo, when all things are made new? It will be in every part of the world clear and limpid, pure from all unpleaſing or unhealthful mixtures, riſing here and there in cryſtal fountains, to refreſh and adorn the earth, "With liquid lapſe of murmuring ſtream." For undoubtedly as there were in paradiſe, there will be various rivers gently gliding along, for the

uſe

uſe and pleaſure of both man and beaſt. But the inſpired writer has expreſsly declared, "there will be no more ſea," (Rev. xxi. 1.) We have reaſon to believe, that at the beginning of the world, when God ſaid, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear," (Gen. i. ver. 9.) the dry land ſpread over the face of the water, and covered it on every ſide. And ſo it ſeems to have done, till, in order to the general deluge, which God had determined to bring upon the earth at once, "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up." But the ſea will then retire within its primitive bounds, and appear on the ſurface of the earth no more. Neither indeed will there be any more need of the ſea. For either as the ancient Poet ſuppoſes,

Omnis feret omnia tellus:

Every part of the earth will naturally produce whatever its inhabitants want: or all mankind will procure what the whole earth affords, by a much eaſier and readier conveyance. For all the inhabitants of the earth, our Lord informs us, will then be ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to angels*: on a level with them in ſwiftneſs as well as ſtrength; ſo that they can, quick as thought, tranſport themſelves, or whatever they want, from one ſide of the globe to the other.

13. But it ſeems, a greater change will be wrought in the *earth*, than even in the air and water. Not that I can believe that wonderful diſcovery of *Jacob Behme*, which many ſo eagerly contend for, that the earth itſelf with all its furniture and inhabitants, will then be tranſparent as glaſs.

glass. There does not seem to be the least foundation for this, either in scripture or reason. Surely not in scripture: I know not one text in the Old or New Testament, which affirms any such thing. Certainly it cannot be inferred from that text in *the Revelation*, chapter the fourth, verse the sixth, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal." And yet, if I mistake not, this is the chief, if not the only scripture which has been urged in favour of this opinion! Neither can I conceive that it has any foundation in reason. It has been warmly alledged, that all things would be far more beautiful, if they were quite transparent. But I cannot apprehend this: yea, I apprehend quite the contrary. Suppose every part of a human body were made transparent as crystal, would it appear more beautiful than it does now? Nay, rather it would shock us above measure. The surface of the body in particular, "The human face divine," is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful objects that can be found under heaven. But could you look through the rosy cheek, the smooth, fair forehead, or the rising bosom, and distinctly see all that lies within, you would turn away from it with loathing and horror.

14. Let us next take a view of those changes which we may reasonably suppose will then take place in the *Earth*. It will no more be bound up with intense cold, nor parched up with extreme heat; but will have such a temperature as will be most conducive to its fruitfulness. If in order to punish its inhabitants, God did of old

"Bid his angels turn askaunce
This oblique Globe,"

thereby

thereby occaſioning violent cold on one part, and violent heat on the other; he will undoubtedly then order them to reſtore it to its original poſition: ſo that there will be a final end, on the one hand of burning heat, which makes ſome parts of it ſcarce habitable; and on the other of

"The rage of Arctos and eternal froſt."

15. And it will then contain no jarring or deſtructive principles within its own boſom. It will no more have any of thoſe violent convulſions in its own bowels. It will no more be ſhaken or torn aſunder, by the impetuous force of *Earthquakes:* and will therefore need neither Veſuvius nor Ætna, nor any *burning mountains* to prevent them. There will be no more horrid rocks, or frightful precipices; no wild deſerts or barren ſands; no impaſſable moraſſes, or unfruitful bogs, to ſwallow up the unwary traveller. There will doubtleſs be inequalities on the ſurface of the earth, which are not blemiſhes, but beauties. And though I will not affirm, That

"Earth hath this variety from heaven
Of pleaſure ſituate in hill and dale;

yet I cannot think gently-riſing hills will be any defect; but an ornament of the new-made earth. And doubtleſs we ſhall then likewiſe have occaſion to ſay,

"Lo there his wondrous ſkill arrays
The fields in chearful green!
A thouſand herbs his hand diſplays,
A thouſand flowers between!"

16. And what will the general produce of the earth be? Not thorns, briars or thiſtles. Not any uſeleſs or fœted weed; not any poiſonous, hurtful, or unpleaſant plant; but every one that can be conducive in anywiſe either to our uſe, or pleaſure. How far beyond all that the moſt lively imagination is now able to conceive! We ſhall no more regret the loſs of the terreſtrial paradiſe, or ſigh at that well-deviſed deſcription of our great Poet,

"Then ſhall this mount
Of paradiſe by might of waves be mov'd
Out of his place, puſh'd by the horned flood,
With all its verdure ſpoiled and trees adrift,
Down the great river to the opening gulph,
And there take root, an iſland ſalt and bare!"

For all the earth ſhall be a more beautiful paradiſe than Adam ever ſaw.

17. Such will be the ſtate of the new earth, with regard to the meaner, the inanimate parts of it. But great as this change will be, it is nothing in compariſon of that which will then take place, throughout all animated nature. In the living part of the creation were ſeen the moſt deplorable effects of Adam's apoſtacy. The whole animated creation, whatever has life, from Leviathan to the ſmalleſt mite, was thereby *made ſubject* to ſuch *vanity*, as the inanimate creatures could not be. They were ſubject to that fell monſter, Death, the conqueror of all that breathe. They were made ſubject to its fore-runner, pain, in its ten thouſand forms; although "God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the death of any living." How many millions of creatures in the ſea, in the air, and on every part of the earth

earth can now no otherwiſe preſerve their lives, than by taking away the lives of others; by tearing in pieces and devouring their poor, innocent, unreſiſting fellow-creatures! Miſerable lot of ſuch innumerable multitudes, who, inſignificant as they ſeem, are the offſpring of one common Father, the creatures of the ſame God of love! It is probable, not only two-thirds of the animal creation, but ninety-nine parts of a hundred are under a neceſſity of deſtroying others in order to preſerve their own life! But it ſhall not always be ſo. He that ſitteth upon the throne, will ſoon change the face of all things, and give a demonſtrative proof to all creatures, that "his mercy is over all his works." The horrid ſtate of things, which at preſent obtains, will ſoon be at an end. On the new earth, no creature will kill or hurt or give pain to any other. The Scorpion will have no poiſonous ſting, the Adder no venomous teeth. The Lion will have no claws to tear the Lamb; no teeth to grind his fleſh and bones. Nay, no creature, no beaſt, bird or fiſh, will have any inclination to hurt any other. For cruelty will be far away, and ſavageneſs and fierceneſs be forgotten. So that violence ſhall be heard no more, neither waſting or deſtruction ſeen on the face of the earth. "The wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb:" (the words may be literally, as well as figuratively underſtood) "and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid. They ſhall not hurt or deſtroy," from the riſing up of the ſun, to the going down of the ſame.

18. But the moſt glorious of all will be, the change which then will take place on the poor, ſinful, miſerable children of men. Theſe had

fallen in many reſpects as from a greater height, ſo into a lower depth than any other part of the creation. But they ſhall "hear a great voice out of heaven, ſaying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. And he will dwell with them: and they ſhall be his people: and God himſelf ſhall be their God," Rev. xxi. ver. 3, 4. Hence will ariſe an unmixt ſtate of holineſs, and happineſs, far ſuperior to that which *Adam* enjoyed in paradiſe. In how beautiful a manner is this deſcribed by the Apoſtle! "God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying. Neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are done away. As there will be no more death, and no more pain or ſickneſs preparatory thereto: as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with friends, ſo there will be no more ſorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more ſin. And to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God. A conſtant communion with the Father and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, through the Spirit: a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!

SERMON

SERMON LXVII.

The Duty of reproving our Neighbour.

Leviticus xix. 17.

Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him.

A GREAT part of the book of *Exodus*, and almoſt the whole of the book of *Leviticus*, relate to the ritual or ceremonial Law of *Moſes*, which was peculiarly given to the children of *Iſrael*; but was ſuch *a yoke*, ſays the Apoſtle *Peter*, *as neither our fathers nor we are able to bear*. We are therefore delivered from it: and this is one branch of *the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free*. Yet it is eaſy to obſerve, that many excellent moral precepts are interſperſed among theſe Ceremonial Laws. Several of them

we find in this very chapter. Such as, "Thou ſhalt not gather every grape in my vineyard: Thou ſhalt leave them for the poor and ſtranger. I am the Lord your God," ver. 10. "Ye ſhall not ſteal, neither lie one to another," ver. 11. "Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired ſhall not abide with thee till the morning," ver. 13. "Thou ſhalt not curſe the deaf, nor put a ſtumbling block before the blind: but ſhalt fear thy God: I am the Lord," ver. 14. As if he had ſaid, I am he whoſe eyes are over all the earth, and whoſe ears are open to their cry. "Ye ſhall do no unrighteouſneſs in judgment: thou ſhalt not reſpect the perſon of the poor," which compaſſionate men may be tempted to do; "nor honour the perſon of the mighty; to which there are a thouſand temptations," ver. 15. "Thou ſhalt not go up and down as a tale bearer among thy people," ver. 16. although this is a ſin which human laws have never yet been able to prevent. Then follows, "Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him.

In order to underſtand this important direction aright, and to apply it profitably to our own ſouls, let us conſider,

Firſt, What it is that we are to rebuke or reprove; What is the thing that is here enjoined? Secondly, Who are they whom ye are commanded to reprove? and Thirdly, How are we to reprove them?

I. 1. Let us conſider, firſt, What is the duty that is here enjoined? What is it we are to rebuke

buke or reprove? And what is it, To reprove. What is it to reprove? To tell any one of his faults, as clearly appears from the following words, *Thou ſhalt not ſuffer ſin upon him.* Sin is therefore the thing we are called to reprove, or rather him that commits ſin. We are to do all that in us lies to convince him of his fault and lead him into the right way.

2. Love indeed requires us, to warn him, not only of ſin (although of this chiefly) but likewiſe of any error, which if it were perſiſted in, would naturally lead to ſin. If we do not hate him in our heart, if we love our neighbour as ourſelves, this will be our conſtant endeavour, to warn him of every evil way, and of every miſtake which tends to evil.

3. But if we deſire, not to loſe our labour, we ſhould rarely reprove any one, for any thing that is of a diſputable nature, that will bear much to be ſaid on both ſides. A thing may poſſibly appear evil to me: therefore I ſcruple the doing of it. And if I were to do it while that ſcruple remains, I ſhould be a ſinner before God. But another is not to be judged by my conſcience, to his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth. Therefore I would not reprove him, but for what is clearly and undeniably evil. Such, for inſtance, is profane curſing and ſwearing, which even thoſe who practiſe it moſt, will not often venture to defend, if one mildly expoſtulates with them. Such is drunkenneſs, which even a habitual drunkard will condemn when he is ſober. And ſuch, in the account of the generality of people, is the profaning of the Lord's Day. And if any which are guilty of theſe ſins, for a while attempt to defend them, very few will perſiſt to do it, if

you

you look them steadily in the face, and appeal to their own conscience in the sight of God.

II. 1. Let us, in the second place, consider, Who are those that we are called to reprove? It is the more needful to consider this, because it is affirmed by many serious persons, That there are some sinners whom the Scripture itself forbids us to reprove. This sense has been put on that solemn caution of our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount. *Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you.* But the plain meaning of these words is, Do not offer the pearls, the sublime doctrines or mysteries of the gospel, to those whom you know to be brutish men, immersed in sins, and having no fear of God before their eyes. This would expose those precious jewels to contempt, and yourselves to injurious treatment. But even those whom we know to be in our Lord's sense, dogs and swine, if we saw them do, or heard them speak, what they themselves know to be evil, we ought in any wise to reprove them; else we *hate our brother in our heart.*

2. The persons intended by *our neighbour* are every child of man, every one that breathes the vital air, all that have souls to be saved. And if we refrain from performing this office of love to any, because they are sinners above other men, they may persist in their iniquity, but their blood will God require at our hands.

3. How striking is Mr. *Baxter's* reflection on this head, in his Saint's Everlasting Rest. "Suppose thou wert to meet one in the lower world, to whom thou hadst denied this office of love, when ye were both together under the sun; what answer couldst thou make to his upbraiding? At such

ſuch a time and place, while we were under the ſun, God delivered me into thy hands. I then did not know the way of ſalvation, but was ſeeking death in the error of my life. And therein thou ſufferedſt me to remain, without once endeavouring to awake me out of ſleep! Hadſt thou imparted to me thy knowledge, and warned me to flee from the wrath to come, neither I nor thou need ever have come into this place of torment."

4. Every one therefore that has a ſoul to be ſaved, is entitled to this good office from thee. Yet this does not imply, that it is done in the ſame degree to every one. It cannot be denied, that there are ſome, to whom it is particularly due. Such, in the firſt place, are our parents, if we have any that ſtand in need of it: unleſs we ſhould place our conſorts and our children on an equal footing with them. Next to theſe we may rank our brothers and ſiſters, and afterwards our relations as they are allied to us in a nearer or more diſtant manner, either by blood or by marriage. Immediately after theſe, are our ſervants, whether bound to us for a term of years, or any ſhorter term. Laſtly, ſuch in their ſeveral degrees are our countrymen, our fellow-citizens, and the members of the ſame ſociety, whether civil or religious: the latter have a particular claim to our ſervice: ſeeing theſe ſocieties are formed with that very deſign, To watch over each other for this very end, that we may not ſuffer ſin upon our brother. If we neglect to reprove any of theſe, when a fair opportunity offers, we are undoubtedly to be ranked among thoſe, that *hate* their *brother in their heart*. And how ſevere is the ſentence of the Apoſtle, againſt

againſt thoſe who fall under this condemnation! *He that hateth his brother*, though it does not break out into words or actions, *is a murderer. And ye know*, continues the Apoſtle, *that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*. He hath not that ſeed planted in his ſoul, which groweth up unto everlaſting life. In other words, he is in ſuch a ſtate, that if he dies therein he cannot ſee life. It plainly follows, That to neglect this, is no ſmall thing, but eminently endangers our final ſalvation.

III. We have ſeen what is meant by reproving our brother, and who thoſe are that we ſhould reprove. But the principal thing remains to be conſidered. How, In what manner are we to prove them?

1. It muſt be allowed, that there is a conſiderable difficulty, in performing this in a right manner. Although at the ſame time, it is far leſs difficult to ſome than it is to others. Some there are who are particularly qualified for it, whether by nature, or practiſe, or grace. They are not incumbered neither with evil ſhame, or that ſore burden, the fear of man. They are both ready to undertake this labour of love, and ſkilful in performing it. To theſe therefore it is little or no croſs: nay, they have a kind of reliſh for it, and a ſatisfaction therein, over and above that which ariſes from a conſciouſneſs of having done their duty. But be it a croſs to us, greater or leſs, we know that hereunto we are called. And be the difficulty ever ſo great to us, we know in whom we have truſted: and that he will ſurely fulfil his word, *As thy day, ſo ſhall thy ſtrength be.*

2. In

2. In what manner then ſhall we reprove our brother, in order that our reproof may be moſt effectual? Let us firſt of all take care, that whatever we do, may be done in *the ſpirit of love;* in the ſpirit of tender good-will to our neighbour, as for one who is the Son of our common Father, and one for whom Chriſt died, that he might be a partaker of ſalvation. Then, by the grace of God, love will beget love. The affection of the ſpeaker will ſpread to the heart of the hearer: and you will find in due time, that your labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.

3. Meantime the greateſt care muſt be taken, that you ſpeak in the ſpirit of *humility*. Beware that you do not think of yourſelf more highly than you ought to think. If you think too highly of yourſelf, you can ſcarce avoid deſpiſing your brother. And if you ſhew, or even feel the leaſt contempt of thoſe whom you reprove, it will blaſt your whole work and occaſion you to loſe all your labour. In order to prevent the very appearance of pride, it will be often needful to be explicit on the head: to diſclaim all preferring yourſelf before him: and at the very time you reprove that which is evil, to own and bleſs God for that which is good in him.

4. Great care muſt be taken, in the third place, to ſpeak in the ſpirit of *meekneſs*, as well as *lowlineſs*. The Apoſtle aſſures us, "that the wrath of men worketh not the righteouſneſs of God." Anger, though it be adorned with the name of zeal, begets anger; not love or holineſs. We ſhould therefore avoid with all poſſible care, the very appearance of it. Let there be no trace of it, either in the eyes, the geſture, or the tone

tone of voice: but let these concur in manifesting a loving, humble, and dispassionate spirit.

5. But all this time see that you do not trust in yourself. Put no confidence in your own wisdom or address, or abilities of any kind. For the success of all you speak or do, trust not in yourself, but in the great Author of every good and perfect gift. Therefore while you are speaking, continually lift up your heart to him that worketh all in all. And whatsoever is spoken in the spirit of *prayer* will not fall to the ground.

6. So much for the *spirit* wherewith you should speak, when you reprove your neighbour. I now proceed to the outward *manner*. It has been frequently found, that the prefacing a reproof with a frank profession of good will, has caused what was spoken to sink deep into the heart. This will generally have a far better effect, than that grand fashionable engine, flattery, by means of which the men of the world have often done surprising things. But the very same things, yea, far greater, have much oftener been effected, by a plain and artless declaration of disinterested love. When you feel God has kindled this flame in your heart, hide it not; give it full vent: it will pierce like lightning. The stout, the hard-hearted will melt before you, and know that God is with you of a truth.

7. Although it is certain that the main point in reproving is, to do it with a mild spirit, yet it must also be allowed there are several little circumstances with regard to the outward manner, which are by no means without their use, and therefore are not to be despised. One of these is, Whenever you reprove, do it with great *seriousness*;

ſeriouſneſs; ſo that as you really are in earneſt, you may likewiſe appear ſo to be. A ludicrous reproof makes little impreſſion, and is ſoon forgot. Beſides, that it many times is taken ill, as if you ridiculed the perſon you reprove. And indeed, thoſe who are not accuſtomed to make jeſts, do not take it well to be jeſted upon. One means of giving a ſerious air to what you ſpeak, is as often as may be, to uſe the very words of Scripture. Frequently we find the word of God, even in a private converſation, has a peculiar energy; and the ſinner when he expects it leaſt, feels it "ſharper than a two-edged ſword."

8. Yet there are ſome exceptions to this general rule of reproving ſeriouſly. There are ſome exempt caſes, wherein, as a good judge of human nature obſerves,

Ridiculum acri fortius.

A little well-placed raillery will pierce deeper than ſolid argument. But this has place chiefly, when we have to do with thoſe, who are ſtrangers to religion. And when we condeſcend to give a ludicrous reproof to a perſon of this character, it ſeems we are authorized ſo to do, by that advice of *Solomon*, "Anſwer a fool according to his folly, leſt he be wiſe in his own eyes."

9. The manner of the reproof may in other reſpects too, be varied according to the occaſion. Sometimes you may find it proper to uſe many words, to expreſs your ſenſe at large. At other times you may judge it more expedient, to uſe few words: perhaps a ſingle ſentence. And at others, it may be adviſeable, to uſe no words at all; but a geſture, a ſigh, or a look. Particu-

larly when the perſon you would reprove, is greatly your ſuperior. And frequently this ſilent kind of reproof will be attended by the power of God. And conſequently have a far better effect, than a long and laboured diſcourſe.

10. Once more. Remember the remark of *Solomon*, *A word ſpoken* in ſeaſon, *how good is it?* It is true, if you are providentially called to reprove any one, whom you are not likely to ſee any more, you are to ſnatch the preſent opportunity, and to ſpeak *in ſeaſon*, or *out of ſeaſon*. But with them whom you have frequent opportunities of ſeeing, you may wait for a fair occaſion. Here the advice of the Poet has place. You may ſpeak

Si validus, ſi lætus erit, ſi denique poſcit.

when he is in a good humour, or when he aſks it you. Here you may catch the

Mollia tempora fandi.

time when his mind is in a ſoft, mild frame. And then God will both teach you how to ſpeak, and give a bleſſing to what is ſpoken.

11. But here let me guard you againſt one miſtake. It paſſes for an indiſputable maxim, "Never attempt to reprove a man when he is intoxicated with drink." Reproof, it is ſaid, is then thrown away, and can have no good effect. I dare not ſay ſo. I have ſeen not a few clear inſtances of the contrary. Take one. Many years ago, paſſing by a man in *Moorfields*, who was ſo drunk, he could hardly ſtand, I put a paper into his hand. He looked at it and ſaid, "A word—a word to a drunkard—that is me—Sir, Sir! I am wrong—I know I am wrong

wrong—pray let me talk a little with you." He held me by the hand a full half hour. And I believe he got drunk no more.

12. I beſeech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, do not deſpiſe poor drunkards. Have compaſſion on them. Be inſtant with them, in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon! Let not ſhame, or fear of men, prevent your pulling theſe brands out of the burning: many of them not ſelf-condemned:

> "Nor do they not diſcern the evil plight,
> That they are in."

But they deſpair; they have no hope of eſcaping out of it. And they ſink into it ſtill deeper, becauſe none elſe has any hope for them! "Sinners of every other ſort, ſaid a venerable old Clergyman, have I frequently known converted to God. But an habitual drunkard, I have never known converted." But I have known five hundred, perhaps five thouſand. Ho! Art thou one, who readeſt theſe words? Then hear thou the words of the Lord! I have a meſſage from God unto the, O ſinner! Thus ſaith the Lord, Caſt not away thy hope. I have not forgotten thee. He that tells thee, "There is no help," is a liar from the beginning. Look up! Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the ſin of the world! This day is ſalvation come to thy ſoul: only ſee that thou deſpiſe not him that ſpeaketh! Juſt now he ſaith unto thee, "Son, be of good cheer! Thy ſins are forgiven thee!"

13. Laſtly. You that are diligent in this labour of love, ſee that you be not diſcouraged, although after you have uſed your beſt endeavours, you ſhould ſee no preſent fruit. You

have need of *patience*, and then *after ye have done the will of God* herein, the harveſt will come. Never be *weary of well-doing: in due time ye ſhall reap, if ye faint not.* Copy after *Abraham*, who *againſt hope, ſtill believed in hope. Caſt thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou ſhalt find it again.*

14. I have now only a few words to add, unto you, my brethren, who are vulgarly called *Methodiſts.* I never heard or read of any conſiderable revival of religion, which was not attended with a ſpirit of reproving. I believe it cannot be otherwiſe; for what is faith, unleſs it worketh by love? Thus it was in every part of England, when the preſent revival of religion began about fifty years ago: all the ſubjects of that revival, all the Methodiſts, ſo called, in every place, were reprovers of outward ſin. And indeed ſo are all, that *being juſtified by faith, have peace with God through Jeſus Chriſt.* Such they are at firſt: and if they uſe that precious gift, it will never be taken away. Come, brethren! In the name of God, let us begin again! Rich or poor, let us ariſe as one man! And in any wiſe, let every man *rebuke his neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him!* Then ſhall all *Great-Britain* and *Ireland* know, that we do not *go a warfare at our own coſt.* Yea, *God ſhall bleſs us, and all the ends of the world ſhall fear him.*

SERMON

SERMON LXVIII.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MATTHEW xvi. 3.

Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

1. THE entire passage runs thus. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him, that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

2. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came." In general these were quite opposite to each other: but it is no uncommon thing for the children of the world to lay aside their opposition

to each other (at leaſt, for a ſeaſon) and cordially to unite in oppoſing the children of God: *and tempting*, that is, making a trial, whether he was indeed ſent of God, "deſired him that he would ſhew them a ſign from heaven," which they believed no falſe prophet was able to do. It is not improbable, they imagined, this would convince them, that he was really ſent from God. "He anſwered and ſaid unto them, When it is evening, ye ſay, It will be fair weather, for the ſky is red: and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the ſky is red and lowering." Probably there were more certain ſigns of fair, and foul weather in their climate, than there are in ours. "O ye hypocrites," making profeſſion of love, while you have enmity in your hearts: "Ye can diſcern the face of the ſky," and judge thereby what the weather will be: "but can ye not diſcern the ſigns of the times," when God brings his firſt begotten Son into the world?

3. Let us more particularly enquire, firſt, What were *the times*, whereof our Lord here ſpeaks? And what were *the ſigns* whereby thoſe times were to be diſtinguiſhed from all others? We may then enquire, ſecondly, What are *the times* which we have reaſon to believe are *now* at hand? And how is it that all who are called Chriſtians do not diſcern *the ſigns of theſe times?*

I. 1. Let us in the firſt place, enquire, What times were thoſe, concerning which our Lord is here ſpeaking? It is eaſy to anſwer, The times of the Meſſiah: the times ordained before the foundation of the world wherein it pleaſed God, to give his only begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, to be "found in faſhion as a man," to live a life of ſorrow and pain, and at length to be

be "obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs; to the end that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." This was the important time, the ſigns whereof the Phariſees and Sadducees could not diſcern. Clear as they were in themſelves, yet ſo thick a veil was upon the heart of theſe men, that they did not diſcern the tokens of his coming, though foretold ſo long before.

2. But what were thoſe ſigns of the coming of that Juſt One, which had been ſo long and ſo clearly foretold? and whereby they might eaſily have diſcerned thoſe times, had not the veil been on their heart? They are many in number; but it may ſuffice to mention a few of them. One of the firſt is that pointed out in the ſolemn words ſpoken by *Jacob* a little before his death, Gen. xlix. 10. *The Sceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.* All both antient and modern Jews agree, that by *Shiloh* we are to underſtand the Meſſiah: who was therefore to come according to the prophecy, *before the Sceptre*, that is, the ſovereignty, *departed from Judah*. But it did without controverſy depart from *Judah*, at this very time, an infallible ſign, that at this very time *Shiloh*, that is the *Meſſiah came.*

3. A ſecond eminent ſign of thoſe times, the times of the coming of the Meſſiah, is given us in the third chapter of the prophecy of Malachi, "Behold, I ſend my Meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare my way before me: (ver. 1.) and the Lord, whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple." How manifeſtly was this fulfilled, firſt by the coming of John the Baptiſt? And then by our bleſſed Lord himſelf, *coming ſuddenly to his temple?*

And

And what ſign could be clearer to thoſe that impartially conſidered the words of the prophet Iſaiah, ch. xl. ver. 4, "The voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtraight!"

4. But yet clearer ſigns than theſe (if any could be clearer) were the mighty works that he wrought. Accordingly he himſelf declares, "The works which I do, they teſtify of me." And to theſe he explicitly appeals in his anſwer to the queſtion of John the Baptiſt, (Not propoſed, as ſome have ſtrangely imagined, from any doubt which he had himſelf: but from a deſire of confirming his diſciples, who might poſſibly waver, when their maſter was taken from their head:) *Art thou he that ſhould come*, the Meſſiah? *Or look we for another?* No bare verbal anſwer could have been ſo convincing, as what they ſaw with their own eyes. Jeſus therefore referred them to this teſtimony: "He anſwered and ſaid unto them, Go and ſhew John the things which ye hear and ſee: the blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk: the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached unto them." Matt. xi. 4, 5.

5. But how then came it to paſs, that thoſe who were ſo ſharp-ſighted in other things, who could *diſcern the face of the ſky*, were not able to diſcern thoſe ſigns, which indicated the coming of the Meſſiah? They could not diſcern them, not for want of evidence: this was full and clear: but for want of integrity in themſelves; becauſe they were a *wicked and adulterous generation*: becauſe the perverſeneſs of their hearts ſpread a cloud over their underſtanding. Therefore although

though the Sun of Righteouſneſs ſhone bright, yet they were inſenſible of it. They were not willing to be convinced: therefore they remained in ignorance. The light was ſufficient: but they ſhut their eyes that they might not ſee it. So that they were without excuſe, till vengeance came upon them to the uttermoſt.

II. 1. We are in the ſecond place to conſider, What are *the times* which we have reaſon to believe are *now* at hand? And how is it that all who are called Chriſtians do not diſcern *the ſigns of theſe times?*

The times which we have reaſon to believe are at hand (if they are not already begun) are what many pious men have termed, The time of *the latter-day glory:* meaning the time wherein God would glorioufly diſplay his power and love, in the fulfilment of his gracious promiſe, that "the knowledge of the Lord ſhall cover the earth, as the waters cover the ſea."

2. "But are there in *England*, or in any part of the world, any *ſigns* of ſuch a time approaching?" It is not many years ſince that a perſon of conſiderable learning, as well as eminence in the Church (then Biſhop of *London*) in his paſtoral letter made this obſervation, "I cannot imagine what perſons mean, by talking of a *great work of God* at this time. I do not ſee any work of God now, more than has been at any other time." I believe it. I believe that great man did not ſee any extraordinary work of God. Neither he nor the generality of Chriſtians, ſo called, ſaw any ſigns of the glorious day that is approaching. But how is this to be accounted for? How is it that thoſe who can now *diſcern the face of the ſky*, who are not only great Philoſophers, but great Divines,

Divines, as much as ever the Sadducees; yea, or the Pharisees, were, do not discern the signs of those glorious times, which if not begun, are nigh, even at the door?

3. We allow indeed, that in every age of the Church, *the kingdom of God came not with observation*; not with splendor and pomp, or with any of those outward circumstances which usually attend the kingdoms of this world. We allow this *kingdom of God is within us*; and that consequently when it begins, either in an individual or in a nation, it *is like a grain of mustard-seed*, which at first *is the least of all seeds*; but nevertheless gradually increases, till *it becomes a great tree*. Or, to use the other comparison of our Lord, It is like "a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

4. But may it not be asked, "Are there now any signs that the day of God's power is approaching?" I appeal to every candid, unprejudiced person, whether we may not at this day discern, all those signs (understanding the words in a spiritual sense) to which our Lord referred John's disciples: *The blind receive their sight*. Those who were blind from their birth, unable to see their own deplorable state, and much more to see God and the remedy he has prepared for them in the Son of his love, now see themselves, yea, and *the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*. *The eyes* of their *understanding* being now *opened*, they see all things clearly. *The deaf hear*. Those that were before utterly deaf, to all the outward and inward calls of God, now hear not only his providential calls, but also the whispers of his grace. *The lame walk*. Those who

who never before arose from the earth, or moved one step toward heaven, are now walking in all the ways of God; yea, running the race that is set before them. *The lepers are cleansed.* The deadly leprosy of sin, which they brought with them into the world, and which no art of man could ever cure is now clean departed from them. And surely never in any age or nation since the Apostles, have those words been so eminently fulfilled. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," as it is at this day. At this day the gospel leaven, faith working by love, inward and outward holiness, or (to use the terms of St. Paul,) "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," hath so spread in various parts of Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, Ireland, in the islands, in the North and South, from Georgia, to New-England, and Newfoundland: that sinners have been truly converted to God, throughly changed both in heart and in life; not by tens, or by hundreds only, but by thousands, yea, by myriads! The fact cannot be denied: we can point out the persons, with their names and places of abode. And yet the wise men of the world, the men of eminence, the men of learning and renown, "cannot imagine what we mean by talking of any extraordinary work of God!" They cannot discern the signs of *these times!* They can see no sign at all of God's arising to maintain his own cause, and set up his kingdom over the earth!

5. But how may this be accounted for? How is it, that they cannot discern the signs of these times? We may account for their want of discernment on the same principle we accounted for that of the Pharisees and Sadducees; namely, that

that they likewiſe are what thoſe were, an *adulterous and ſinful generation.* If their eye was ſingle, their whole body would be full of light. But ſuppoſe their eye be evil, their whole body muſt be full of darkneſs. Every evil temper darkens the ſoul; every evil paſſion clouds the underſtanding. How then can we expect, that thoſe ſhould be able to diſcern the ſigns of the times, who are full of all diſorderly paſſions, and ſlaves to every evil temper? But this is really the caſe. They are full of pride; they think of themſelves far more highly than they ought to think. They are vain; they "ſeek honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh of God only." They cheriſh hatred and malice in their hearts; they give place to anger, to envy, to revenge. They return evil for evil, and railing for railing. Inſtead of overcoming evil with good, they make no ſcruple of demanding an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. They "ſavour not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." They ſet their affections, not on things above, but on the things that are of the earth. They "love the creature more than the Creator:" they are lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God." How then ſhould they diſcern the ſigns of the times? The god of this world whom they ſerve, has blinded their hearts, and covered their minds with a veil of thick darkneſs. Alas! What have theſe "ſouls of fleſh and blood," (as one ſpeaks) to do with God, or the things of God?

6. St. John aſſigns this very reaſon, for the Jews not underſtanding the things of God, Namely, That in conſequence of their preceding ſins, and wilful rejecting the light, God had now delivered

delivered them up to fatan, who had blinded them paft recovery. Over and over, when they might have feen, they would not: they fhut their eyes againft the light. And now they cannot fee, God having given them up to an undifcerning mind; therefore they do not believe, becaufe that Efaiah faid, (that is, becaufe of the reafon given in that faying of Efaiah) "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they fhould not fee with their eyes, nor underftand with their hearts, and be converted, and I fhould heal them." The plain meaning is, Not that God did this by his own immediate power. It would be fhat blafphemy to fay, that God in this fenfe hardens any man. But his Spirit ftrives with them no longer, and then fatan hardens them effectually.

7. And as it was with them in ancient times, fo it is with the prefent generation. Thoufands of thofe who bear the name of Chrift are now given up to an undifcerning mind. The god of this world hath fo blinded their eyes, that the light cannot fhine upon them: fo that they can no more difcern the figns of the times, than the Phariſees and Sadducees could of old. A wonderful inftance of this fpiritual blindnefs, this total inability to difcern the figns of the times mentioned in fcripture, is given us in the very celebrated work of a late eminent writer: who fuppofes, *the New Jerufalem came down from heaven*, when *Conftantine the Great*, called himfelf a Chriſtian. I fay, *called himfelf a Chriſtian*; for I dare not affirm that he *was one*, any more than *Peter the Great*. I cannot but believe, he would have come nearer the mark, if he had faid, that

was the time, when a huge cloud of infernal brimſtone and ſmoke came up from the bottomleſs pit. For ſurely there never was a time wherein ſatan gained ſo fatal an advantage over the Church of Chriſt, as when ſuch a flood of riches, and honour, and power broke in upon it, particularly on the Clergy.

8. By the ſame rule, what ſigns would this writer have expected of the approaching converſion of the heathens? He would doubtleſs have expected a hero, like *Charles* of *Sweden*, or *Frederick* of *Pruſſia*, to carry fire, and ſword, and Chriſtianity through whole nations at once. And it cannot be denied, that ſince the time of *Conſtantine*, many nations have been converted in this way. But could it be ſaid concerning ſuch converſions as theſe, *The kingdom of heaven cometh not with obſervation!* Surely every one muſt obſerve a warrior ruſhing through the land, at the head of fifty or ſixty thouſand men! But is this the way of ſpreading Chriſtianity, which the author of it, the Prince of peace, has choſen? Nay, it is not in this manner, that a grain of muſtard ſeed grows up into a great tree. [illegible] it is not thus, that *a little leaven leavens the whole lump*. Rather, it ſpreads by degrees farther and farther, till the whole is leavened. We may form a judgment of what will be hereafter, by what we have ſeen already. And this is the way wherein true Chriſtian religion, the faith that worketh by love, has been ſpreading, particularly through Great Britain and its dependencies, for half a century.

9. In the ſame manner it continues to ſpread, at the preſent time alſo, as may eaſily appear to all

all thoſe whoſe eyes are not blinded. All thoſe that experience in their own hearts the power of God unto ſalvation, will readily perceive how the ſame religion which they enjoy, is ſtill ſpreading from heart to heart. They take knowledge of the ſame grace of God, ſtrongly and ſweetly working on every ſide: and rejoice to find another and another ſinner, firſt, enquiring, "What muſt I do to be ſaved?" And then teſtifying, "My ſoul doth magnify the Lord, and my ſpirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." Upon a fair and candid enquiry, they find more and more, not only of thoſe who had ſome form of religion, but of thoſe who had no form at all, who were profligate, abandoned ſinners, now entirely changed, truly fearing God and working righteouſneſs. They obſerve more and more, even of theſe poor outcaſts of men, who are inwardly and outwardly changed, loving God and their neighbour; living in the uniform practice of juſtice, mercy, and truth. As they have time, doing good unto all men: eaſy and happy in their lives, and triumphant in their death.

10. What excuſe then have any that believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, for not diſcerning the ſigns of theſe times, as preparatory to the general call of the Heathens? What could God have done which he hath not done to convince you that the day is coming, that the time is at hand, when he will fulfil his glorious promiſes; when he will ariſe to maintain his own cauſe, and to ſet up his kingdom over all the earth? What indeed, unleſs he had *forced* you to believe? And this he could not do, without deſtroying the nature which he had given

you. For he made you free agents: having an inward power of self-determination, which is essential to your nature. And he deals with you as free agents from first to last. As such, you may shut or open your eyes, as you please. You have sufficient light shining all around you: yet you need not see it unless you will. But be assured, God is not well pleased with your shutting your eyes, and then saying, "I cannot see." I counsel you to bestow an impartial examination upon the whole affair. After a candid enquiry into matter of fact, consider deeply, "What hath God wrought?" "Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such a thing? Hath not a nation, *as it were*, been born in a day?" How swift as well as how deep, and how extensive a work has been wrought in the present age? And certainly, "not by might, neither by power, but by the spirit of the Lord." For how utterly inadequate were the means? How insufficient were the instruments to work any such effect! At least, those of which it has pleased God to make use of in the British dominions and in America. By how unlikely instruments, has God been pleased to work from the beginning? "A few, young, raw heads, (said the Bishop of London!) What can they pretend to do?" They pretended to be *that* in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of a man. They pretended, (and do so at this day) to do the work whereunto they are sent: to do just what the Lord pleased. And if it be his pleasure, to throw down the walls of Jericho, the strong holds of Satan, not by the engines of war, but by the blasts of rams' horns, who shall say unto him, "What dost thou?"

11. Meantime

11. Meantime "bleſſed are your eyes; for they ſee: many prophets and righteous men have deſired to ſee the things you ſee and have not ſeen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." You ſee and acknowledge the day of your viſitation; ſuch a viſitation as neither you nor your fathers had known. You may well ſay, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad therein." You ſee the dawn of that glorious day, whereof all the prophets have ſpoken. And how ſhall you moſt effectually improve this day of your viſitation?

12. The firſt point is, See that you yourſelves receive not the bleſſing of God in vain. Begin at the root, if you have not already. Now repent and believe the goſpel. If you have believed, "look to yourſelves, that ye loſe not what you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward! Stir up the gift of God that is within you! Walk in the light as he is in the light." And while you "hold faſt that which you have attained, go on unto perfection." Yea, and when you are "made perfect in love, *ſtill* forgetting the things that are behind, preſs on to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus."

13. It behoves you in the next place to help your neighbours. "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." As you have time, do good unto all men, but eſpecially unto them that are of the houſehold of faith, proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation ready to be revealed, not only to thoſe of your own houſehold, not only to your relations, friends, and acquaintance, but to all whom God providentially

delivers into your hands. *Ye*, who already know in whom you have believed, "are the salt of the earth." Labour to season, with the knowledge and love of God, all that you have any intercourse with. "Ye are a city set upon a hill: *ye* cannot, *ye ought not* to be hid. Ye are the light of the world. Men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel:" how much less the all-wise God. No, let it "shine to all that are in the house, all that are witnesses of your life and conversation. Above all, continue instant in prayer, both for yourselves, for all the Church of God, and for all the children of men, that they may remember themselves and be turned unto our God. That they likewise may enjoy the gospel blessing on earth, and the glory of God in heaven.

SERMON

SERMON LXIX.

On DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

LUKE xii. 7.

Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

1. THE doctrine of Divine Providence, has been renewed by wise men in all ages. It was believed by many of the eminent Heathens, not only Philosophers, but Orators and Poets. Innumerable are the testimonies concerning it, which are scattered up and down in their writings: agreeable to that well known saying in Cicero, *Deorum moderamine cuncta geri*: That all things, all events in this world, are under the management of God. We might bring a cloud of witnesses to confirm this, were any so hardy as to deny it.

2. The same truth is acknowledged at this day in most parts of the world: yea, even by those nations which are so barbarous, as not to know the use of letters. So when *Paufloeber*, an

Indian

Indian Chief, of the *Chicasaw* Nation in *North-America*, was asked, "Why do you think the Beloved Ones (so they term God) takes care of *you?*" He answered without any hesitation, "I was in the battle with the *French*, and the bullet went on this side, and the bullet went on that side; and this man died, and that man died. But I am alive still: and by this I know that the Beloved Ones takes care of me."

3. But although the ancient as well as modern Heathens had some conception of a Divine Providence, yet the conceptions which most of them entertained concerning it, were dark, confused, and imperfect: yea, the accounts which the most enlightened among them gave, were usually contradictory to each other. Add to this, that they were by no means assured of the truth of those very accounts. They hardly dared to affirm any thing, but spoke with the utmost caution and diffidence. Insomuch that what *Cicero* himself, the author of that noble declaration, ventures to affirm in cool blood, at the end of his long dispute upon the subject, amounts to no more than this lame and impotent conclusion, *Mihi verisimilior videbatur Cottæ oratio;* "What *Cotta* said (the person that argued in the defence of the Being and Providence of God) *seemed* to me *more probable*, than what his opponent had advanced to the contrary."

4. And it is no wonder. For only God himself, can give a clear, consistent, perfect account, (that is, as perfect as our weak understanding can receive, in this our infant state of existence; or at least, as is consistent with the designs of his government,) of his manner of governing the world. And this he hath done, in his written word:

word: all the Oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both of the Old Teſtament and the New, deſcribe ſo many ſcenes of Divine Providence.—It is the beautiful remark of a fine Writer, "Thoſe who object to the Old Teſtament in particular, that it is not a connected hiſtory of nations, but only a congeries of broken, unconnected events, do not obſerve the nature and deſign of theſe writings. They do not ſee, that Scripture is *The hiſtory of God.*" Thoſe who bear this upon their minds, will eaſily perceive, that the inſpired writers never loſe ſight of it; but preſerve one unbroken, connected chain, from the beginning to the end. All over that wonderful book, as *Life and Immortality* (immortal Life) is gradually *brought to light*, ſo is *Immanuel God with us*, and his kingdom ruling over all.

5. In the verſes preceding the text, our Lord has been arming his diſciples againſt the fear of man. *Be not afraid* (ſays he, ver. 4.) *of them that can kill the body, and after have no more that they can do.* He guards them againſt this fear, firſt by reminding them of what was infinitely more terrible than any thing which man could inflict: *fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell.* He guards them farther againſt it, by the conſideration of an over ruling Providence. *Are not five ſparrows ſold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten before God.* Or, as the words are repeated by St. *Matthew*, with a very inconſiderable variation, (ch. x. ver. 29.) *Not one of them ſhall fall to the ground without your Father. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

6. We muſt next obſerve, that this ſtrong expreſſion, though repeated by both the Evangeliſts,

geliſts, need not imply, (though if any one thinks it does, he may think ſo very innocently) that God does literally number all the hairs that are on the heads of all his creatures. But it is a proverbial expreſſion, implying that nothing is ſo ſmall or inſignificant in the ſight of men, as not to be an object of the care and providence of God, before whom nothing is ſmall that concerns the happineſs of any of his creatures.

7. There is ſcarce any doctrine in the whole compaſs of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this. And at the ſame time, there is ſcarce any that is ſo little regarded, and perhaps ſo little underſtood. Let us endeavour then, with the aſſiſtance of God, to examine it to the bottom, to ſee upon what foundation it ſtands, and what it properly implies.

8. The Eternal, Almighty, All-wiſe, All-gracious God, is the Creator of heaven and earth. He called out of nothing by his all-powerful word the whole univerſe, all that is. *Thus the heavens and the earth were created, and all the hoſts of them.* And after he had ſet all things elſe in array, the plants after their kinds, fiſh and fowl, beaſts and reptiles after their kinds, *he created man after his own image.* And the Lord ſaw, that every diſtinct part of the univer' was good. But when he ſaw every thing he had made, all in connexion with each other, *behold it was very good.*

9. And as this all-wiſe, all-gracious Being created all things, ſo he ſuſtains all things. He is the Preſerver, as well as the Creator of every thing that exiſts. *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power*, that is, by his powerful word. Now it muſt be that he knows every thing he has made,

made, and every thing he preſerves from moment to moment. Otherwiſe he could not preſerve it: he could not continue to it the being which he has given it. And it is nothing ſtrange that he who is omnipreſent, who *filleth heaven and earth*, who is in every place, ſhould ſee what is in every place, where he is intimately preſent. If the eye of man diſcerns things at a ſmall diſtance, the eye of an Eagle, what is at a greater, the eye of an Angel, what is at a thouſand times greater diſtance, (perhaps taking in the ſurface of the earth at one view:) how ſhall not the eye of God ſee every thing, through the whole extent of Creation? Eſpecially conſidering that nothing is diſtant from him: in whom we all *live and move and have our being.*

10. It is true, our narrow underſtandings but imperfectly comprehend this. But whether we comprehend it or no, we are certain that ſo it is. As certain as it is, that he created all things, and that he ſtill ſuſtains all that is created: ſo certain it is, that he is preſent at all times, in all places; that he is above, beneath: that he *beſets us behind and before*, and as it were *lays his hand upon us.* We allow, *ſuch knowledge is too high and wonderful for us: we cannot attain unto it.* The manner of his preſence no man can explain, nor probably any angel in heaven. Perhaps what the ancient philoſopher ſpeaks of the ſoul, in regard to its reſidence in the body, that it is *tota in toto, & tota in qualibet parte*, might in ſome ſenſe be ſpoken of the Omnipreſent Spirit, in regard to the univerſe. That he is not only, "All in the whole, but all in every part." Be this as it may, it cannot be doubted but he ſees every atom of his creation: and that a thouſand times more clearly,

clearly, than we see the things that are close to us. even of these we see only the surface, while he sees the inmost essence of every thing.

11. The omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of the beings that he hath made. He knows all the connexions, dependencies and relations, and all the ways wherein one of them can affect another. In particular, he saw all the inanimate parts of the creation, whether in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. He knows how the stars, comets or planets above, influence the inhabitants of the earth beneath: what influence the lower heavens, with their magazines of fire, hail, snow, and vapours, winds, and storms have on our planets. And what effects may be produced in the bowels of the earth by fire, air, or water: what exhalations may be raised therefrom, and what changes wrought thereby: what effect every mineral or vegetable may have upon the children of men: all these lie naked and open to the eye of the Creator and Preserver of the Universe.

12. He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles or insects. He knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest. He knows every good angel and every evil angel in every part of his dominions: and looks from heaven upon the children of men over the whole face of the earth.

He knows all the hearts of the sons of men, and understands all their thoughts. He sees what any angel, any devil, any man, either thinks, or speaks, or does: yea, and all they feel. He sees all their sufferings, with every circumstance of them.

13. And

13. And is the Creator and Preſerver of the World, unconcerned for what he ſees therein? Does he look upon theſe things either with a malignant or heedleſs eye? Is he an Epicurian god? Does he ſit at eaſe in the heaven, without regarding the poor inhabitants of earth? It cannot be. He hath made us; not we ourſelves: and he cannot deſpiſe the work of his own hands. We are his children. And can a mother forget the children of her womb: yea, they may forget: yet will not God forget us. On the contrary, he hath expreſsly declared, that as his *eyes are over all the earth*, ſo he *is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works*. Conſequently he is concerned every moment, for what befals every creature upon earth: and more eſpecially for every thing that befals any of the children of men. It is hard indeed to comprehend this: nay, it is hard to believe it; conſidering the complicated wickedneſs, and the complicated miſery which we ſee on every ſide. But believe it we muſt, unleſs we make God a liar, although it is ſure, no man can comprehend it. It behoves us, then, to humble ourſelves before God, and to acknowledge our ignorance. Indeed how can we expect that a man ſhould be able to comprehend the ways of God? Can a worm comprehend a worm? How much leſs can it be ſuppoſed, that a man can comprehend God?

"For how can finite meaſure infinite?

14. He is infinite in wiſdom as well as in power: and all his wiſdom is continually employed in managing all the affairs of his Creation for the good of all his creatures. For his wiſdom and goodneſs go hand in hand: they are

inſeparably united, and continually act in concert with almighty power; for the real good of all his creatures. His power being equal to his wiſdom and goodneſs, continually co-operates with them. And to him all things are poſſible. He doth whatſoever pleaſeth him, in heaven and earth, and in the ſea and all deep places. And we cannot doubt of his exerting all his power, as in ſuſtaining, ſo in governing all that he has made.

15. Only he that can do all things elſe cannot deny himſelf: he cannot counteract himſelf, or oppoſe his own work. Were it not for this, he would deſtroy all ſin, with its attendant pain in a moment. He would aboliſh wickedneſs out of his whole creation, and ſuffer no trace of it to remain. But in ſo doing he would counteract himſelf, he would altogether overturn his own work, and undo all that he has been doing, ſince he created man upon the earth. For he created man in his own image: a ſpirit like himſelf: a ſpirit endued with underſtanding, with will, or affections, and liberty: without which neither his underſtanding, nor his affections could have been of any uſe: neither would he have been capable either of vice or virtue. He could not be a moral agent, any more than a tree or a ſtone. If therefore God were thus to exert his power, there would certainly be no more vice: but it is equally certain, neither could there be any virtue in the world. Were human liberty taken away, men would be as incapable of virtue as ſtones. Therefore (with reverence be it ſpoken) the Almighty himſelf cannot do this thing. He cannot thus contradict himſelf, or undo what he has done. He cannot deſtroy, out of the ſoul of man,

man, that image of himſelf wherein he made him. And without doing this, he cannot aboliſh ſin and pain out of the world. But were it to be done, it would imply no wiſdom at all; but barely a ſtroke of Omnipotence. Whereas all the manifold wiſdom of God (as well as all his power and goodneſs) is diſplayed in governing man as man: not as a ſtock or a ſtone, but as an intelligent and free ſpirit, capable of chuſing either good or evil. Herein appears the depth of the wiſdom of God, in his adorable Providence! In governing men, ſo as not to deſtroy either their underſtanding, will, or liberty. He commands all things both in heaven and earth, to aſſiſt man, in attaining the end of his being, in working out his own ſalvation: ſo far as it can be done, without compulſion, without over-ruling his liberty. An attentive enquirer may eaſily diſcern the whole frame of Divine Providence is ſo conſtituted, as to afford man every poſſible help, in order to his doing good and eſchewing evil, which can be done without turning man into a machine; without making him incapable of virtue or vice, reward or puniſhment.

16. Mean time it has been remarked by a pious writer, That there is (as he expreſſes it) a threefold circle of Divine Providence, over and above that which preſides over the whole univerſe. We do not now ſpeak of that over-ruling hand, which governs the inanimate Creation; which ſuſtains the ſun, moon and ſtars in their ſtations, and guides their motions: we do not refer to his care of the animal creation, every part of which we know is under his government, who *giveth food unto the cattle and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him:* but we here ſpeak of

that ſuperintending providence, which regards the children of men. Each of theſe is eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the others, by thoſe who accurately obſerve the ways of God. The outermoſt circle includes the whole race of mankind, all the deſcendants of Adam, all the human creatures that are diſperſed over the face of the earth. This compriſes not only the chriſtian world; thoſe that name the name of Chriſt, but the Mahometans alſo, who conſiderably out-number even the nominal Chriſtians: yea, and Heathens likewiſe, who very far out-number the Mahometans and Chriſtians put together. *Is he not the God of the Jews*, ſays the Apoſtle, *and not of the Gentiles alſo?* And ſo we may ſay, Is he the God of the Chriſtians, and not of the Mahometans and Heathens? Yea, doubtleſs of the Mahometans and Heathens alſo. His love is not confined: *The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works.* He careth for the very outcaſts of men: it may truly be ſaid,

Free as the air thy bounty ſtreams
O'er all thy works: thy mercies' beams
Diffuſive as thy ſun's ariſe.

17. Yet it may be admitted, that he takes more immediate care of thoſe that are compriſed in the ſecond, the ſmaller circle: which includes all that are called Chriſtians, all that profeſs to believe in Chriſt. We may reaſonably think that theſe in ſome degree honour him, at leaſt more than the Heathens do: God does likewiſe in ſome meaſure honour them, and has a nearer concern for them. By many inſtances it appears, that the Prince of this world has not ſo full power over theſe as over the Heathens. The God

God whom they even profeſs to ſerve, does in ſome meaſure maintain his own cauſe. So that the ſpirits of darkneſs do not reign ſo uncontrolled over them, as they do over the Heathen world.

18. Within the third, the innermoſt circle, are contained only the real Chriſtians: thoſe that worſhip God, not in form only, but in ſpirit and in truth. Herein are compriſed all that love God, or at leaſt, truly fear God and work righteouſneſs. All in whom is the mind which was in Chriſt, and who walk as Chriſt alſo walked. The words of our Lord above recited peculiarly refer to theſe. It is to theſe in particular that he ſays, *Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* He ſees their ſouls and their bodies: he takes particular notice of all their tempers, deſires and thoughts; all their words and actions. He marks all their ſufferings, inward and outward, and the ſource whence they ariſe: ſo that we may well ſay,

"Thou know'ſt the pains thy ſervants feel,
Thou hear'ſt thy children's cry;
And their beſt wiſhes to fulfil,
Thy grace is ever nigh."

Nothing relative to theſe is too great, nothing too little for his attention. He has his eye continually, as upon every individual perſon that is a member of this his family, ſo upon every circumſtance that relates either to their ſouls or bodies, either to their inward or outward ſtate, wherein either their preſent or eternal happineſs is in any degree concerned.

19. But what ſay the wiſe men of the world to this? They anſwer with all readineſs, "Who

doubts of this? We are not Atheists. We all acknowledge a providence: that is, a general providence; for indeed the particular providence of which some talk, we know not what to make of. Surely the little affairs of men are far beneath the regard of the great Creator and the Governor of the Universe! Accordingly,

> He sees with equal eyes, as Lord of all,
> A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

Does he indeed? I cannot think it: because (whatever that fine poet did, or his patron, whom he so deeply despised, and yet grossly flattered) I believe the Bible; wherein the Creator and Governor of the world himself tells me quite the contrary. That he has a tender regard for the brute creatures I know: he does, in a measure, *take care for oxen: he provideth food for the cattle*, as well as *herbs for the use of men. The lions roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God. He openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.*

> "The various troops of sea and land
> In sense of common want agree:
> All wait on thy dispensing hand,
> And have their daily alms from thee.
> They gather what thy stores disperse,
> Without their trouble to provide:
> Thou op'st thy hand: the universe,
> The craving world is all supplied."

Our heavenly Father *feedeth the fowls of the air.* But mark! *Are not ye much better than they? Shall he not then much more feed you*, who are pre-eminent by so much odds? He does not in that sense look upon *you* and *them* "with equal eyes;"

let

ſet you on a level with *them*. Leaſt of all does he ſet you on a level with brutes, in reſpect of life and death. *Right precious in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his ſaints.* Do you really think, the death of a ſparrow is equally precious in his ſight? He tells us indeed, that *not a ſparrow falleth on the ground without our Father.* But he aſks at the ſame time, *Are you not of more value than many ſparrows?*

20. But in ſupport of a general, in contradiction to a particular providence, the ſame elegant poet, lays it down as an unqueſtionable maxim,

"The univerſal cauſe,
Acts not by partial, but by general laws."

Plainly meaning, that he never deviates from thoſe general laws, in favour of any particular perſon. This is a common ſuppoſition: but which is altogether inconſiſtent with the whole tenor of ſcripture: for if God never deviates from theſe general laws, then there never was a miracle in the world: ſeeing every miracle is a deviation from the general laws of nature. Did the Almighty confine himſelf to theſe general laws, when he divided the Red Sea? When he commanded the waters to ſtand on a heap, and make a way for his redeemed to paſs over? Did he act by general laws, when he cauſed the ſun to ſtand ſtill, for the ſpace of a whole day? No, nor in any of the miracles which are recorded either in the Old or New Teſtament.

21. But it is on ſuppoſition that the Governor of the world, never deviates from thoſe general laws that Mr. *Pope* adds thoſe beautiful lines in full

full triumph, as having now clearly gained the point,

" Shall burning Ætna, if a ſage requires,
Forget to thunder and recal her fires?
On air or ſea new motions be impreſt,
Oh blameleſs Bethel! to relieve thy breaſt?
When the looſe mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation ceaſe, if you go by?
Or ſome old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reſerve the hanging wall?"

We anſwer, If it pleaſe God to continue the life of any of his ſervants, he will ſuſpend that or any other law of nature. The ſtone ſhall not fall, the fire ſhall not burn; the floods ſhall not flow. Or he will give his angels charge, and in their hands ſhall they bear him up, through and above all dangers.

22. Admitting then, that in the common courſe of nature, God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himſelf from making exceptions to them, whenſoever he pleaſes; either by ſuſpending that law, in favour of thoſe that love him, or by employing his mighty angels: by either of which means he can deliver out of all danger them that truſt in him.

" What! You expect miracles then!" Certainly I do, if I believe the Bible. For the Bible teaches me, that God hears and anſwers prayer. But every anſwer to prayer, is properly a miracle. For if natural cauſes take their courſe, if things go on in their natural way, it is no anſwer at all. Gravitation therefore ſhall ceaſe, that is, ceaſe to operate, whenever the Author of it pleaſes. Cannot

Cannot the men of the world understand these things? That is no wonder: it was observed long ago, *An unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it.*

23. But I have not done with this same *general providence* yet. By the grace of God, I will sift it to the bottom. And I hope to shew, it is such stark staring nonsense, as every man of sense ought to be utterly ashamed of.

You say, "You allow a *general* providence, but deny a *particular* one." And what is a general (of whatever kind it be) that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of its several particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? Tell me any genus, if you can, that contains no species? What is it that constitutes a genus, but so many species added together? What, I pray, is a "whole that contains no parts?" Mere nonsense and contradiction! Every whole must, in the nature of things, be made up of its several parts, insomuch that if there be no parts, there can be no whole.

24. As this is a point of the utmost importance, we may consider it a little farther. What do you mean by a general providence, contradistinguished from a particular? Do you mean a providence which superintends only the larger parts of the universe? Suppose the sun, moon and stars. Does it not regard the earth too? You allow it does. But does it not likewise regard the inhabitants of it? Else what doth the earth, an inanimate lump of matter signify? Is not one spirit, one heir of immortality, of more value than all the earth? Yea, though you add to it the sun, moon and stars? Nay, and the whole

whole inanimate Creation? Might we not say, *These shall perish*, but *This remaineth: these shall wax old as doth a garment:* but this (it may be said in a lower sense, even of the creature) *is the same, and his years shall not fail.*

25. Or do you mean, when you assert a general providence, distinct from a particular one, That God regards only some parts of the world, and does not regard others? What parts of it does he regard? Those without, or those within the Solar system? Or does he regard some parts of the earth, and not others? Which parts? Only those within the temperate Zones? What parts then are under the care of his providence? Where will you lay the line? Do you exclude from it those that live in the torrid Zone? Or those that dwell within the arctic Circles? Nay rather say, *The Lord is loving to every man*, and his care is *over all his works.*

26. Do you mean (for we would fain find out your meaning, if you have any meaning at all) That the providence of God does indeed extend to all parts of the earth, with regard to great and singular events; such as the rise and fall of empires: but that the little concerns of this or that man are beneath the notice of the Almighty? Then you do not consider, that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms, which have place only with respect to men? With regard to the most High, man and all the concerns of men, are nothing, less than nothing before him. And nothing is *small* in his sight, that in any degree affects the welfare of any that fear God and work righteousness. What becomes then of your general providence, exclusive of a particular? Let it be for ever rejected by all rational men, as

absurd,

abſurd, ſelf-contradictory nonſenſe. We may then ſum up the whole Scriptural doctrine of providence, in that fine ſaying of St. Auſtin, *Ita præſides ſingulis ſicut univerſis, & univerſis ſicut ſingulis!*

"Father, how wide thy glories ſhine!
Lord of the univerſe—and mine!
Thy goodneſs watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one ſoul:
Yet keeps my every ſacred hair,
As I remain'd thy ſingle care."

27. We may learn from this ſhort view of the providence of God, firſt, to put our whole truſt in him, who hath never failed them that ſeek him. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf makes this very uſe of the great truth now before us. *Fear not therefore;* if you truly fear God, you need fear none beſide. He will be a ſtrong tower to all that truſt in him, from the face of your enemies. What is there either in heaven or in earth that can harm you, while you are under the care of the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth? Let all earth and all hell combine againſt you; yea, the whole animate and inanimate Creation: they cannot harm, while God is on your ſide: his favourable kindneſs covers *you as a ſhield!*

28. Nearly allied to this confidence in God, is the thankfulneſs we owe for his kind protection. Let thoſe give thanks whom the Lord thus delivers from the hand of all their enemies. What an unſpeakable bleſſing it is, to be the peculiar care of him that has all power in heaven and earth! How can we ſufficiently praiſe him, while we are under his wings, and his *faithfulneſs and truth are our ſhield and buckler?*

29. But

29. But mean time we ſhould take the utmoſt care, to walk humbly and cloſely with our God. Walk humbly; for if you in anywiſe rob God of his honour, if you aſcribe any thing to yourſelf, the things which ſhould have been for your wealth, will *prove* to you *an occaſion of falling*. And walk cloſely! See that you have a conſcience void of offence, toward God and toward man. It is ſo long as you do this, that you are the peculiar care of your Father which is in heaven. But let not the conſciouſneſs of his caring for you, make you careleſs, indolent or ſlothful: on the contrary, while you are penetrated with that deep truth, *The help that is done upon earth, he doth it himſelf:* be as earneſt and diligent in the uſe of all the means, as if you were your own protector.

Laſtly, In what a melancholy condition are thoſe, who do not believe there is any providence: or, which comes to exactly the ſame point, not a particular one! Whatever ſtation they are in, as long as they are in the world, they are expoſed to numberleſs dangers, which no human wiſdom can foreſee, and no human power can reſiſt. And there is no help! If they truſt in men, they find them *deceitful upon the weights*. In many caſes they cannot help: in others, they will not. But were they ever ſo willing, they will die: therefore vain is the help of man. And God is far above out of their ſight: they expect no help from him. Theſe modern (as well as the ancient) Epicureans have learnt,

> That the "univerſal cauſe,
> Acts not by partial, but by general laws."

He

He only takes care of the great globe itſelf; not of its puny inhabitants. He heeds not,

How thoſe "vagrant emmets crawl,
At random on the air-ſuſpended ball."

How uncomfortable is the ſituation of that man who has no farther hope than this! But on the other hand, how unſpeakably *happy* is the man, *that hath the Lord for his help, and whoſe hope is in the Lord his God!* who can ſay, *I have ſet the Lord always before me: becauſe he is on my right hand, I ſhall not be moved.* Therefore, *though I walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy ſtaff they comfort me.*

SERMON LXX.

The Wisdom of GOD's Counsels.

Romans xi. 33.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

1. SOME apprehend *the wisdom* and *the knowledge* of God to mean one and the same thing. Others believe, that the wisdom of God more directly refers to his appointing the ends of all things, and his knowledge to the means which he hath prepared and made conducive to those ends. The former seems to be the most natural explication: as the wisdom of God in its most extensive meaning, must include the one as well as the other, the means as well as the ends.

2. Now the wisdom as well as the power of God, is abundantly manifested in his Creation, in the formation and arrangement of all his works in heaven above and in the earth beneath: and in adapting

adapting them all to the ſeveral ends for which they were deſigned: inſomuch that each of them apart from the reſt is good: but all together are *very good*; all conſpiring together in one connected ſyſtem, to the glory of God, in the happineſs of his intelligent creatures.

3. As this wiſdom appears even to ſhort-ſighted men, (and much more to ſpirits of a higher order) in the creation and diſpoſition of the whole univerſe, and every part of it, ſo it equally appears in their preſervation, in his "upholding all things by the word of his power." And it no leſs eminently appears, in the permanent government of all that he has created. How admirably does his wiſdom direct the motions of the heavenly bodies! Of all the ſtars in the firmament, whether thoſe that are *fixt*, or thoſe that *wander*, though never out of their ſeveral orbits! Or the ſun in the midſt of heaven! Of thoſe amazing bodies, the comets, that ſhoot in every direction through the immeaſurable fields of ether! How does he ſuperintend all the parts of this lower world, this "ſpeck of creation" the earth! So that all things are ſtill, as they were at the beginning, *beautiful in their ſeaſons:* and ſummer and winter, ſeed-time and harveſt regularly follow each other. Yea, all things ſerve their Creator: "fire and hail, ſnow and vapour, wind and ſtorm are fulfilling his word." So that we may well ſay, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

4. Equally conſpicuous is the wiſdom of God in the government of nations, of ſtates and kingdoms: yea, rather more conſpicuous: if infinite can be allowed to admit of any degrees. For the whole inanimate creation, being totally paſſive

and inert, can make no oppoſition to his will. Therefore in the natural world all things roll on in an even uninterrupted courſe. But it is far otherwiſe in the moral world. Here evil men, and evil ſpirits, continually oppoſe the divine will, and create numberleſs irregularities. Here therefore is full ſcope for the exerciſe of all the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God, in counteracting all the wickedneſs and folly of men, and all the ſubtilty of ſatan, to carry on his own glorious deſign, the ſalvation of loſt mankind. Indeed were he to do this by an abſolute decree, and by his own irreſiſtible power, it would imply no wiſdom at all. But his wiſdom is ſhewn, by ſaving man in ſuch a manner, as not to deſtroy his nature, not to take away the liberty which he has given him.

5. But the riches both of the wiſdom and the knowledge of God, are moſt eminently diſplayed in his church: in planting it like a grain of muſtard ſeed, the leaſt of all ſeeds; in preſerving and continually increaſing it, till it grew into a great tree, notwithſtanding the uninterrupted oppoſition of all the powers of darkneſs. This the Apoſtle juſtly terms "the manifold wiſdom, πολυποίκιλος σοφια of God." It is an uncommonly expreſſive word, intimating that this wiſdom in the manner of its operation, is diverſified a thouſand ways, and exerts itſelf with infinite varieties. Theſe things the higheſt "angels deſire to look into," but can never fully comprehend. It ſeems to be with regard to theſe chiefly, that the Apoſtle utters that ſtrong exclamation, "How unſearchable are his judgments!" His counſels, deſigns! Impoſſible to be fathomed! *And his ways* of accompliſhing them, *paſt finding out*, impoſſible

impoſſible to be traced! According to the Pſalmiſt, "His paths are in the deep waters, and his footſteps are not known."

6. But a little of this he has been pleaſed to reveal unto us. And by keeping cloſe to what he has revealed, mean time comparing the word and the work of God together, we may underſtand a part of his ways. We may in ſome meaſure trace this manifold wiſdom from the beginning of the world: from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moſes, and from Moſes to Chriſt. But I would now conſider it (after juſt touching on the Hiſtory of the Church in paſt ages) only with regard to what he has wrought in the preſent age, during the laſt half century: yea, and in this little corner of the world, the Britiſh Iſlands only.

7. In the fulneſs of time, juſt when it ſeemed beſt to his infinite wiſdom, God brought his firſt-begotten into the world. He then laid the foundation of his Church, though it hardly appeared till the day of Pentecoſt. And it was then a glorious Church: all the members thereof being "filled with the Holy Ghoſt," being "of one heart and of one mind, and continuing ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtle's doctrine, and in fellowſhip, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers: in fellowſhip," that is, having "all things in common;" no man counting "any thing he had his own."

"Meek, ſimple followers of the Lamb,
They liv'd and thought, and ſpake the ſame:
They all were of one heart and ſoul,
And only love inſpir'd the whole."

8. But this happy ſtate did not continue long. See Ananias and Sapphira! through the love of

money *(the root of all evil)* making the firſt breach in the community of goods. See the partiality, the unjuſt reſpect of perſons on the one ſide, the reſentment and murmuring on the other, even while the Apoſtles themſelves preſided over the Church at Jeruſalem! See the grievous ſpots and wrinkles that were found, in every part of the Church, recorded not only in the Acts, but in the Epiſtles of St. Paul, James, Peter, and John. A ſtill fuller account we have in the Revelation: and according to this, in what a condition was the chriſtian church, even in the firſt century, even before St. John was removed from the earth: if we may judge (as undoubtedly we may) of the ſtate of the church in general, from the ſtate of thoſe particular churches, (all but that of *Smyrna*) to which our Lord directed his Epiſtles! And from this time, for fourteen hundred years, it was corrupted more and more, as all hiſtory ſhews, till ſcarce any, either of the power or form of religion was left.

9. Nevertheleſs it is certain, that the gates of hell did never totally prevail againſt it. God always reſerved a ſeed for himſelf, a few that worſhipped him in ſpirit and in truth. I have often doubted, whether theſe were not the very perſons whom the rich and honourable chriſtians, who will always have number, as well as power on their ſide, did not ſtigmatize, from time to time, with the title of *Heretics*. Perhaps it was chiefly by this artifice of the devil and his children, that the good which was in them being evil-ſpoken of, they were prevented from being ſo extenſively uſeful, as otherwiſe they might have been. Nay, I have doubted, whether that Arch-heretic, *Montanus*, was not one of the holieſt men in the ſecond century. Yea, I would not

not affirm, that the Arch-heretic of the fifth Century, (as plentifully as he has been beſpattered for many ages) was not one of the holieſt men of that age, not excepting St. *Auguſtine* himſelf: (a wonderful ſaint! as full of pride, paſſion, bitterneſs, cenſoriouſneſs, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him, as *George Fox* himſelf.) I verily believe, the real Hereſy of *Pelagius* was neither more nor leſs than this, the holding that Chriſtians may by the grace of God, (not without it; that I take to be a mere ſlander) *go on to perfection:* or in other words, *fulfil the law of Chriſt.*

"But St. *Auguſtine* ſays"—When St. *Auguſtine's* paſſions were heated, his word is not worth a ruſh. And here is the ſecret. St. *Auguſtine* was angry at *Pelagius*. Hence he ſlandered and abuſed him (as his manner was) without either fear or ſhame. And St. *Auguſtine* was then in the Chriſtian world, what *Ariſtotle* was afterwards. There needed no other proof of any aſſertion, than "*Ipſe dexit:* St. *Auguſtine ſaid it.*"

10. But to return. When iniquity had overſpread the Church as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a ſtandard againſt it. He raiſed up a poor Monk, without wealth, without power, and at that time without friends, to declare war, as it were, againſt all the world; againſt the Biſhop of *Rome* and all his adherents. But this little ſtone being choſen of God, ſoon grew into a great mountain; and increaſed more and more, till it had covered a conſiderable part of *Europe*. Yet even before *Luther* was called home, the love of many was waxed cold. Many that had once run well, turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them. Yea, the greater part of

thoſe

thoſe that once experienced the power of faith, made ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience. The obſerving this was ſuppoſed to be the occaſion of that illneſs (a fit of the ſtone) whereof *Luther* died: after uttering theſe melancholy words, "I have ſpent my ſtrength for nought. Thoſe who are called by my name, are it is true, reformed in opinions and modes of worſhip. But in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the Papiſts."

11. About the ſame time it pleaſed God to viſit *Great Britain*. A few in the reign of King *Henry* the Eighth, and many more in the three following reigns, were real witneſſes of true Scriptural Chriſtianity. The number of theſe exceedingly increaſed, in the beginning of the following Century. And in the year 1627, there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit, in ſeveral parts of *England*, as well as in *Scotland*, and the north of *Ireland*. But from the time that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their hearts began to be eſtranged from him, and to cleave to the preſent world: no ſooner was perſecution ceaſed, and the poor, deſpiſed, perſecuted Chriſtians, inveſted with power, and placed in eaſe and affluence, but a change of circumſtances brought a change of ſpirit. Riches and honour, ſoon produced their uſual effects. Having the world, they quickly loved the world. They no longer breathed after heaven, but became more and more attached to the things of earth. So that in a few years, one who knew and loved them well, and was an unexceptionable judge of men and manners, [Dr. *Owen*] deeply lamented over them, as having

having loſt all the life and power of religion, and being become juſt of the ſame ſpirit with thoſe, whom they deſpiſed as the mire in the ſtreets.

12. What little religion was left in the land, received another deadly wound at the reſtoration, by one of the worſt Princes that ever ſat on the *Engliſh* throne, and by the moſt abandoned court in *Europe*. And infidelity now broke in amain, and overſpread the land as a flood. Of courſe, all kind of immorality came with it, and increaſed to the end of the Century. Some feeble attempts were made to ſtem the torrent during the reign of Queen *Ann*. But it ſtill increaſed till about the year 1725, when Mr. *Law* publiſhed his "Practical treatiſe on Chriſtian Perfection;" and not long after, his "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." Here the ſeed was ſown, which ſoon grew up, and ſpread to *Oxford*, *London*, *Briſtol*, *Leeds*, *York*, and within a few years to the greateſt part of *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*.

13. But what means did the wiſdom of God make uſe of, in effecting this great work? He thruſt out ſuch labourers into his harveſt, as the wiſdom of man would never have thought on. He choſe the weak things to confound the ſtrong, and the fooliſh things to confound the wiſe. He choſe a few young, poor, ignorant men, without experience, learning, or art; but ſimple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, ſeeking no honour, no profit, no pleaſure, no eaſe, but merely to ſave ſouls: fearing neither want, pain, perſecution; nor whatever man could do unto them: yea, not counting their lives dear unto themſelves, ſo they might finiſh their courſe with joy. Of the ſame ſpirit were the people whom

whom God by their word called out of darkneſs into his marvellous light, many of whom ſoon agreed to join together, in order to ſtrengthen each others hands in God. Theſe alſo were ſimple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works: deſiring neither honour, nor riches, nor pleaſure, nor eaſe, nor any thing under the ſun, but to attain the whole image of God, and to dwell with him in glory.

14. But as theſe young Preachers grew in years they did not all grow in grace. Several of them indeed increaſed in other knowledge; but not proportionably in the knowledge of God. They grew leſs ſimple, leſs alive to God, and leſs devoted to him. They were leſs zealous for God, and conſequently leſs active, leſs diligent in his ſervice. Some of them began to deſire the praiſe of men and not the praiſe of God only: ſome to be weary of a wandering life, and ſo ſeek eaſe and quietneſs. Some began again to fear the faces of men; to be aſhamed of their calling; to be unwilling to deny themſelves, to take up their croſs daily, *and endure hardſhip as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt.* Wherever theſe Preachers laboured, there was not much fruit of their labours. Their word was not as formerly, clothed with power: it carried with it no demonſtration of the Spirit. The ſame faintneſs of ſpirit was in their private converſation. They were no longer, *inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon: warning every man, and exhorting every man, if by any means they might ſave ſome.*

15. But as ſome preachers *declined from their firſt love*, ſo did many of the people. They were likewiſe aſſaulted on every ſide, encompaſſed with manifold temptations. And while many of them

them triumphed over all, and were *more than conquerors through him that loved them*, others gave place to the world, the flesh, or the devil, and so *entered into temptation*: some of them *made shipwreck of their faith* at once; some by slow, insensible degrees. Not a few being in want of the necessaries of life, were overwhelmed with the cares of the world. Many relapsed into the desires of other things, which choaked the good seed, *and it became unfruitful.*

16. But of all temptations, none so struck at the whole work of God, as the *deceitfulness of riches*: a thousand melancholy proofs of which I have seen, within these last fifty years. Deceitful are they indeed! For who will believe they do him the least harm? And yet I have not known threescore rich persons, perhaps not half the number, during threescore years, who as far as I can judge, were not less holy than they would have been had they been poor. By *riches* I mean, not thousands of pounds; but any more than will procure the conveniencies of life. Thus I account him a man rich, who has food and raiment for himself and family, without running into debt, and something over. And how few are there in these circumstances who are not hurt, if not destroyed thereby? Yet who takes warning? Who seriously regards that awful declaration of the Apostle, Even *they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation, and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* How many sad instances have we seen of this in *London*, in *Bristol*, in *Newcastle*, in all the large trading towns throughout the kingdom, where God has lately caused his power to be known? See, how many of those, who were once

once ſimple of heart, deſiring nothing but God, are now gratifying *the deſire of the fleſh*, ſtudying to pleaſe their ſenſes: particularly their taſte: endeavouring to enlarge the pleaſure of taſting as far as poſſible. Are not *you* of that number? Indeed you are no drunkard, and no glutton. But do you not indulge yourſelf in a kind of regular ſenſuality? Are not eating and drinking the greateſt pleaſures of your life, the moſt conſiderable part of your happineſs? If ſo, I fear, St. *Paul* would have given you a place among thoſe *whoſe god is their belly!* How many of them are now again indulging *the deſire of the eye?* Uſing every means which is in their power, to enlarge the pleaſures of their imagination? If not in grandeur, which as yet is out of their way, yet in new or beautiful things? Are not you ſeeking happineſs in pretty or elegant apparel, or furniture? Or in new clothes, or books, or in pictures, or gardens? "Why, what harm is there in theſe things!" There is this harm, that they gratify, *the deſire of the eye*, and thereby ſtrengthen and increaſe it; making you more and more dead to God, and more alive to the world. How many are indulging *the pride of life!* Seeking the honour that cometh of men? Or *laying up treaſures on earth?* They *gain all they can*, honeſtly and conſcientiouſly. They *ſave all they can*, by cutting off all needleſs expence: by adding frugality to diligence. And ſo far all is right. This is the duty of every one that fears God. But they do not *give all they can*; without which they muſt needs grow more and more earthly-minded. Their affections will cleave to the duſt more and more, and they will have leſs and leſs communion with God. Is not this *your* caſe?

caſe? Do you not ſeek the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God? Do not *you* lay up, or at leaſt deſire and endeavour to *lay up treaſures on earth!* Are you not then (deal faithfully with your own ſoul!) more and more alive to the world? And conſequently more and more dead to God? It cannot be otherwiſe. That *muſt* follow, unleſs you give all you can, as well as gain and ſave all you can. There is no other way under heaven to prevent your money from ſinking you lower than the grave. For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if it *was* in him in ever ſo high a degree, yet if he ſlides into the love of the world, by the ſame degrees that this enters in, the love of God will go out of the heart.

17. And perhaps there is ſomething more than all this contained in thoſe words, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Here we are expreſsly warned againſt loving *the world*, as well as againſt loving "the things of the world." *The world* is the men that know not God: that neither love nor fear him. To love theſe with a love of delight or complacence, to ſet our affections upon them, is here abſolutely forbidden: and by parity of reaſon, to converſe or have any intercourſe with them, farther than neceſſary buſineſs requires. Friendſhip or intimacy with them, St. *James* does not ſcruple to term adultery. "Ye adulterers and adultereſſes, know ye not, that the friendſhip of the world is enmity with God? Whoſoever therefore will be a friend to the world, is an enemy of God." Do not endeavour to ſhuffle away, or evade the meaning of thoſe ſtrong words. They plainly require us, to ſtand aloof from them; to have no need-

leſs commerce with unholy men. Otherwiſe we ſhall ſurely ſlide into conformity to the world, to their maxims, ſpirit and cuſtoms. For not only their words, harmleſs as they ſeem, do eat as doth a canker: but their very breath is infectious: their ſpirit imperceptibly influences our ſpirit. It ſteals "like water into our bowels, and like oil into our bones."

18. But all rich men are under a continual temptation to acquaintance and converſation with worldly men. They are likewiſe under a continual temptation to pride, to think more highly of themſelves than they ought to think. They are ſtrongly tempted to revenge, when they are ever ſo little affronted. And having the means in their own hands, how few are there that reſiſt the temptation? They are continually tempted to ſloth, indolence, love of eaſe, ſoftneſs, delicacy; to hatred of ſelf-denial, and taking up the croſs, even that of *faſting* and *riſing early*, without which it is impoſſible to grow in grace. If *you* are increaſed in goods, do not you know that theſe things are ſo? Do you contract no intimacy with worldly men? Do not you converſe with them more than duty requires? Are you in no danger of pride? Of thinking yourſelf better than your poor, dirty neighbours? Do you never reſent, yea, and revenge an affront? Do you never render evil for evil? Do not you give way to indolence or love of eaſe? Do you deny yourſelf and take up your croſs daily? Do you conſtantly riſe as early as you did once? Why not? Is not your ſoul as precious now as it was then? How often do you faſt? Is not this a duty to *you*, as much as to a day labourer? But if you are wanting in this, or any other reſpect, who will tell you of it? Who dares tell you the plain truth,

truth; but those who neither hope nor fear any thing from you? And if any venture to deal plainly with you, how hard is it for you to bear it? Are not you far less reproveable, far less adviseable, than when you were poor. It is well if you can bear reproof even from *me*. And in a few days you will see me no more.

Once more therefore I say, having gained and saved all you can, do you give all you can: else your money will eat your flesh as fire, and will sink you to the nethermost hell!

O beware of "laying up treasures upon earth!" Is it not treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath?

Lord! I have warned them: but if they will not be warned, what can I do more? I can only "give them up unto their own heart's lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations!"

19. By not taking this warning, it is certain many of the Methodists are already fallen. Many are falling at this very time. And there is great reason to apprehend, that many more will fall, most of whom will rise no more!

But what method may it be hoped the All-wise God will take, to repair the decay of his work? If he does not remove the candlestick from this people, and raise up another people, who will be more faithful to his grace, it is probable he will proceed in the same manner as he has done in time past. And this has hitherto been his method. When any of the old Preachers *left their first love*, lost their simplicity and zeal, and departed from the work, he raised up young men, who *are* what they *were*, and sent them into the harvest in their place. The same he has done, when he was pleased to remove any of his

faithful labourers into *Abraham's* bosom. So when *Henry Millard*, *Edward Dunstone*, *John Manners*, *Thomas Walsh*, or any others rested from their labours, he raised up other young men from time to time willing and able to perform the same service. It is highly probable, he will take the very same method for the time to come. The place of those Preachers who either die in the Lord, or lose the spiritual life which God had given them, he will supply by others that are alive to God, and desire only to spend and be spent for him.

20. Hear ye this, all ye Preachers, who have not the same life, the same communion with God, the same zeal for his cause, the same burning love to souls, that you had once! "Take heed unto yourselves, that ye lose not the things ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Beware lest God swear in his wrath, that ye shall bear his standard no more! Lest he be provoked to take the word of his grace utterly out of your mouth! Be assured, the Lord hath no need of *you*: *his* work doth not depend upon *your* help. As he is able "out of stones, to raise up children to Abraham;" so he is able out of the same to raise up preachers after his own heart! O make haste! "Remember from whence you are fallen: and repent and do the first works!"

21. Would it not provoke the Lord of the harvest, to lay you altogether aside, if you *despised* the labourers he had raised up, merely because of their *youth?* This was commonly done to us, when *we* were first sent out, between forty and fifty years ago. Old, wise men asked, "What will these *young* heads do?" So the then Bishop of *London* in particular. But shall we adopt their

their language? God forbid! Shall we teach him, whom he ſhall ſend? Whom he ſhall employ in his own work? Are we then the *men*, and ſhall *wiſdom die with us?* Does the work of God hang upon us? O humble yourſelves before God, leſt he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver!

22. Let us next conſider what method has the wiſdom of God taken for theſe five and forty years, when thouſands of *the people*, that once ran well, one after another *drew back to perdition?* Why, as faſt as any of the poor were overwhelmed with worldly care, ſo that the ſeed they had received became unfruitful: and as faſt as any of the rich, by giving way to the love of the world, to fooliſh and hurtful deſires, or to any other of thoſe innumerable temptations, which are inſeparable from riches: God has conſtantly from time to time raiſed up men, endued with the ſpirit which they had loſt. Yea, and generally this change has been made, with conſiderable advantage. For the laſt were not only (for the moſt part) more numerous than the firſt, but more watchful, profiting by their example: more ſpiritual, more heavenly-minded: more zealous, more alive to God, and more dead to all things here below.

23. And bleſſed be God, we ſee he is now doing the ſame thing, in various parts of the kingdom. In the room of thoſe that have fallen from their ſtedfaſtneſs, or are falling at this day, he is continually raiſing up out of the ſtones other children to Abraham. This he does at one or another place, according to his own will: pouring out his quickening ſpirit, on this or another people, juſt as it pleaſeth him. He is

raiſing up thoſe of every age and degree, young men and maidens, old men and children, to be "a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to ſhew forth his praiſe, who has called them out of darkneſs, into his marvellous light." And we have no reaſon to doubt, but he will continue ſo to do, till the great promiſe is fulfilled, till "the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea: till all Iſrael is ſaved, and the fulneſs of the Gentiles is come in."

24. But have all that have ſunk under manifold temptations, ſo fallen that they can riſe no more? Hath the Lord "caſt them all off for ever, and will he be no more entreated? Is his promiſe come utterly to an end for evermore?" God forbid that we ſhould affirm this! Surely he is able to heal all their backſlidings: for with God no word is impoſſible. And is he not willing too? He is "God and not man; therefore his compaſſions fail not." Let no backſlider deſpair: "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon *you*: unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Mean time thus ſaith the Lord to you that now ſupply their place, "Be not high minded, but fear!" If the *Lord ſpared not* thy elder brethren, *take heed leſt he ſpare not thee! Fear*, though not with a ſervile, tormenting fear, leſt thou fall by any of the ſame temptations, by either the cares of the world, the deceitfulneſs of riches, or the deſire of other things. Tempted you will be in ten thouſand different ways, perhaps as long as you remain in the body: but as long as you continue to watch and pray, you will not

enter

enter into temptations. His grace has been hitherto ſufficient for you; and ſo it will be unto the end.

25. You ſee here, brethren, a ſhort and general ſketch, of the manner wherein God works upon earth, in repairing this work of grace, where ever it is decayed through the ſubtilty of ſatan, and the unfaithfulneſs of men, giving way to the fraud and malice of the devil. Thus he is now carrying on his own work, and thus he will do, to the end of time. And how wonderfully plain and ſimple is his way of working, in the ſpiritual, as well as the natural world! That is, his general plan of working, of repairing whatſoever is decayed. But as to innumerable particulars, we muſt ſtill cry out, "O the depth! How unfathomable are his counſels! And his paths paſt tracing out!"

SERMON

SERMON LXXI.

The Imperfection of Human Knowledge.

1 Corinthians xiii. 10.

We know in part.

1. THE desire of knowledge is an universal principle in man, fixed in his inmost nature. It is not variable, but constant in every rational creature, unless while it is suspended by some stronger desire. And it is insatiable; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;" neither the mind with any degree of knowledge which can be conveyed into it. And it is planted in every human soul for excellent purposes. It is intended, to hinder our taking up our rest, in any thing here below: to raise our thoughts to higher and higher objects, more and more worthy of our consideration, till we ascend

aſcend to the ſource of all knowledge, and all excellence, the all-wiſe, and all-gracious Creator.

2. But although our deſire of knowledge has no bounds, yet our knowledge itſelf has. It is indeed confined within very narrow bounds; abundantly narrower than common people imagine, or men of learning are willing to acknowledge: a ſtrong intimation (ſince the great Creator doth nothing in vain) that there will be ſome future ſtate of being, wherein that now inſatiable deſire will be ſatisfied, and there will be no longer ſo immenſe a diſtance, between the appetite and the object of it.

3. The preſent knowledge of man is exactly adapted to his preſent wants. It is ſufficient to warn us of, and preſerve us from, moſt of the evils to which we are now expoſed: and to procure us whatever is neceſſary for us in this our infant ſtate of exiſtence. We know enough of the nature and ſenſible qualities of the things that are round about us, ſo far as they are ſubſervient to the health and ſtrength of our bodies. We know how to procure and prepare our food: we know what raiment is fit to cover us: we know how to build our houſes, and to furniſh them with all neceſſaries and conveniencies. We know juſt as much as is conducive to our living comfortably in this world. But of innumerable things above, below, and round about us, we know little more than that they exiſt. And in this our deep ignorance is ſeen the goodneſs, as well as the wiſdom of God, in cutting ſhort his knowledge on every ſide, on purpoſe to *hide pride from man*.

4. Therefore

4. Therefore it is, that by the very conſtitution of their nature, the wiſeſt of men *know* but *in part*. And how amazingly ſmall a part do they know, either of the Creator, or of his works? This is a very needful, but a very unpleaſing theme; for *vain man would be wiſe*. Let us reflect upon it for awhile. And may the God of wiſdom and love open our eyes to diſcern our own ignorance!

I. 1. To begin with the great Creator himſelf. How aſtoniſhingly little do we know of God? How ſmall a part of his nature do we know? Of his eſſential Attributes? What conception can we form of his Omnipreſence? Who is able to comprehend, how God is in this and every place? How he fills the immenſity of ſpace? If Philoſophers, by denying the exiſtence of a Vacuum, only meant that there is no place empty of God, that every point of infinite ſpace is full of God, certainly no man could call it in queſtion. But ſtill, the fact being admitted, what is Omnipreſence or Ubiquity? Man is no more able to comprehend this, than to graſp the Univerſe.

2. The Omnipreſence or Immenſity of God, Sir *Iſaac Newton* endeavours to illuſtrate, by a ſtrong expreſſion, by terming Infinite ſpace "the Senſorium of the Deity." And the very Heathens did not ſcruple to ſay, "All things are full of God:" juſt equivalent with his own declaration, "Do not I fill heaven and earth, ſaith the Lord?" How beautifully does the Pſalmiſt illuſtrate this? "Whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there alſo. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea: even there thy hand ſhall find

find me, and thy right hand ſhall hold me." But in the mean time, what conception can we form, either of his Eternity or Immenſity? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we cannot attain unto it.

3. A ſecond eſſential attribute of God is Eternity. He exiſted before all time. Perhaps we might more properly ſay, He *does exiſt* from everlaſting to everlaſting. But what is Eternity? A celebrated Author ſays, that the Divine Eternity is, *Vitæ interminabilis tota ſimul & perfecta poſſeſſio*: The at once entire and perfect poſſeſſion of never ending life. But how much wiſer are we for this definition? We know juſt as much of it as we did before. *The at once entire and perfect poſſeſſion?* Who can conceive what this means?

4. If indeed God had ſtamped, (as ſome have maintained) an idea of himſelf on every human ſoul, we muſt certainly have underſtood ſomething of theſe, as well as his other attributes. For we cannot ſuppoſe he would have impreſſed upon us either a falſe or an imperfect idea of himſelf. But the truth is, no man ever did, or does now find any ſuch idea ſtamped upon his ſoul. The little which we do know of God (except what we receive by the inſpiration of the Holy One) we do not gather from any inward impreſſion, but gradually acquire from without. *The inviſible things of God*, if they are known at all, *are known from the things that are made*: not from what God hath written in our hearts, but from what he hath written in all his works.

5. Hence then, from his works, particularly his works of Creation, we are to learn the knowledge of God. But it is not eaſy to conceive, how little we know even of theſe: to begin with thoſe

thoſe that are at a diſtance. Who knows how far the univerſe extends? What are the limits of it? The morning ſtars can tell, who ſang together, when the lines of it were ſtretched out: when God ſaid, "This be thy juſt circumference, O World!" But all beyond the fixt ſtars is utterly hid from the children of men. And what do we know of the *fixt ſtars?* Who telleth the *number* of them? Even of that ſmall portion of them, that by their mingled light form what we call *the Milky way?* And who knows the *uſe* of them? Are they ſo many Suns that illuminate their reſpective planets? Or do they only miniſter to this, (as Mr. *Hutchinſon* ſuppoſes) and contribute in ſome unknown way, to the perpetual circulation of light and ſpirit? Who knows what *Comets* are? Are they planets not fully formed? Or planets deſtroyed by a conflagration? Or are they bodies of a wholly different nature, of which we can form no idea? Who can tell, what is the *Sun?* Its uſe we know: but who knows, of what *ſubſtance* it is compoſed? Nay, we are not yet able to determine, whether it be fluid or ſolid! Who knows what is the preciſe *diſtance* of the Sun from the earth? Many Aſtronomers are perſuaded, it is a hundred millions of miles: others, that it is only eighty-ſix millions, though generally accounted ninety. But equally great men ſay, it is no more than fifty; ſome of them that it is but twelve. Laſt comes Dr. *Rogers, and demonſtrates* that it is juſt two millions, nine hundred thouſand miles! So little do we know even of this glorious luminary, the eye and ſoul of the lower world! And juſt as much of the planets that ſurround him: yea, of our own planet, the *Moon.* Some indeed have diſcovered

"Rivers

" Rivers and mountains on her ſpotty globe."

Yea, have marked out all her ſeas and continents! But after all, we know juſt nothing of the matter. We have nothing but mere, uncertain conjecture, concerning the neareſt of all the heavenly bodies.

6. But let us come to the things that are ſtill nearer home, and enquire, what knowledge we have of them. How much we know of that wonderful Body, *Light?* How is it communicated to us? Does it flow in a continued ſtream from the Sun? Or does the Sun impel the particles next his orb, and ſo on and on, to the extremity of his ſyſtem? Again, Does light gravitate, or not? Does it attract or repel other bodies? Is it ſubject to the *general* laws, which obtain in all other matter? Or is it a body *ſui generis*, altogether different from all other matter? Is it the ſame with the *electric fluid* or not? Who can explain the phenomenon of electricity? Who knows why ſome bodies *conduct* the electric fluid, and others arreſt its courſe? Why is the phial capable of being charged to ſuch a point, and no farther? A thouſand more queſtions might be aſked on this head, which no man living can anſwer.

7. But ſurely we underſtand the *air* we breathe, and which encompaſſes us on every ſide. By that admirable property of elaſticity, it is the general ſpring of nature. But is elaſticity eſſential to air, and inſeparable from it? Nay, it has been lately proved by numberleſs experiments, that air may be *fixt*, that is, diveſted of its elaſticity, and *generated*, or reſtored to it again. Therefore it is no otherwiſe elaſtic, than as it is

connected with electric fire! And is not this electric or ethereal fire, the only true, essential elastic in nature? Who knows by what power, dew, rain, and other vapours rise and fall in the air? Can we account for the phenomenon of them, upon the common principles? Or must we own with a late ingenious author, that those principles are utterly insufficient, and that they cannot be rationally accounted for, but upon the principle of electricity?

8. Let us now descend to the *earth* which we tread upon, and which God has peculiarly given to the children of men. Do the children of men understand this? Suppose the terraqueous globe to be seven or eight thousand miles in diameter, how much of this do we know? Perhaps a mile or two of its surface: so far the art of man has penetrated. But who can inform us, what lies beneath the region of stones, metals, minerals, and other fossils? This is only a thin crust, which bears an exceeding small proportion to the whole. Who can acquaint us with the inner parts of the globe? Whereof do these consist? Is there a central fire, a grand reservoir, which not only supplies the burning mountains, but also ministers (though we know not how) to the ripening of gems and metals; yea, and perhaps to the production of vegetables, and the well-being of animals too? Or is the great deep still contained in the bowels of the earth, a central abyss of waters? Who hath seen? Who can tell? Who can give any solid satisfaction to a rational enquirer?

9. How much of the very *surface* of the globe is still utterly unknown to us? How very little do we know of the Polar regions, either North

or

or South, either in *Europe* or *Asia*? How little of those vast countries, the inland parts either of *Africa* or *America*? Much less do we know what is contained in the broad Sea, the great Abyss, which covers so large a part of the globe. Most of its chambers are inaccessible to man, so that we cannot tell how they are furnished. How little do we know of those things on the dry land, which fall directly under our notice? Consider even the most simple metals, or stones: how imperfectly are we acquainted with their nature and properties? Who knows what it is that distinguishes metals from all other fossils? It is answered, "Why they are heavier." Very true, but what is the cause of their being heavier? What is the specific difference between metals and stones? Or between one metal and another? Between gold and silver? Between tin and lead? It is all mystery to the sons of men.

10. Proceed we to the *vegetable* kingdom. Who can demonstrate that the sap in any vegetable, performs a regular circulation through its vessels or that it does not? Who can point out the specific difference between one kind of plant and another? Or the peculiar, internal, conformation, and disposition of their component parts? Yea, what man living thoroughly understands the nature and properties of any one plant under heaven?

11. With regard to *animals*. Are *microscopic animals* (so called) *real* animals or no? If they are, are they not essentially different from all other animals in the universe, as not requiring any food, nor generating or being generated? Are they no animals at all, but merely inanimate particles of matter, in a state of fermentation?

How totally ignorant are the moſt ſagacious of men, touching the whole affair of *generation?* Even the generation of men. *In the book* of the Creator indeed *were all* our *members written, which day by day were faſhioned, when as yet there were none of them.* But by what rule were they faſhioned? In what manner? By what means was the firſt motion communicated to the *punctum ſaliens?* When and how was the immortal ſpirit ſuperadded to the ſenſeleſs clay? 'Tis myſtery all. And we can only ſay, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

12. With regard to *inſects*, many are the diſcoveries which have been lately made. But how little is all that is diſcovered yet, in compariſon of what is undiſcovered? How many millions of them, by their extreme minuteneſs, totally eſcape all our enquiries? And indeed the minute parts of the largeſt animals elude our utmoſt diligence. Have we a more complete knowledge of *fiſhes* than we have of inſects? A great part, if not the greateſt part of the inhabitants of the waters, are totally concealed from us. It is probable, the ſpecies of ſea-animals are full as numerous as the land-animals. But how few of them are known to us? And it is very little we know of thoſe few. With *birds* we are a little better acquainted: and indeed it is but a little. For of very many we know hardly any thing more than their outward ſhape. We know a few of the obvious properties of others, chiefly thoſe that frequent our houſes. But we have not a thorough, adequate knowledge even of them. How little do we know of *beaſts?* We do not know whence the different tempers and qualities ariſe, not only in different ſpecies of them,

them, but in individuals of the ſame ſpecies: yea, and frequently in thoſe who ſpring from the ſame parents, the ſame both male and female animal. Are they mere machines? Then they are incapable either of pleaſure or pain. Nay they can have no ſenſes: they neither ſee nor hear; they neither taſte, nor ſmell. Much leſs can they know or remember; or move, any otherwiſe than they are impelled from without. But all this, (as daily experiments ſhow) is quite contrary to matter of fact.

13. Well, but if we know nothing elſe, do not we know ourſelves? Our bodies and our ſouls? What is our *ſoul?* It is a ſpirit, we know. But what is a ſpirit? Here we are at a full ſtop. And where is the ſoul lodged? In the Pineal Gland? In the whole brain? In the heart? In the blood? In any ſingle part of the body? Or (if any one can underſtand thoſe terms) "all in all, and all in every part?" How is the ſoul *united* to the body? A ſpirit to a clod? What is the ſecret, imperceptible chain that couples them together? Can the wiſeſt of men give a ſatisfactory anſwer to any of theſe plain queſtions?

And as to our *body* itſelf, how little do we know? During a night's ſleep, a healthy man perſpires one part in four leſs when he ſweats, than when he does not. Who can account for this? What is *fleſh?* That of the *muſcles* in particular? Are the fibres that compoſe it of a determinate ſize? So that they can be divided only ſo far? Or are they reſolvible in infinitum? How does a muſcle *act?* By being inflated, and conſequently ſhortened? But what is it inflated with? If with blood, how and whence comes that blood? And whither does it go, the mo-

ment the muſcle is relaxed? Are the *nerves* pervious or ſolid? How do they act? By vibration, or tranſmiſſion of the *animal ſpirits!* Who knows what the animal ſpirits are? Are they electric fire? What is *ſleep?* Wherein does it conſiſt? What is *dreaming?* How can we know dreams from waking thoughts? I doubt, no man knows. O how little do we know, even concerning ourſelves? What then can we expect to know, concerning the whole Creation of God.

II. 1. But are we not better acquainted with his *works of Providence*, than with his works of Creation? It is one of the firſt principles of religion, that his kingdom ruleth over all: ſo that we may ſay with confidence, *O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name over all the earth!* It is a childiſh conceit, to ſuppoſe chance governs the world, or has any part of the government of it: no, not even in thoſe things, that to a vulgar eye, appear to be perfectly caſual. *The lot is caſt into the lap: but the diſpoſal thereof is from the Lord.* Our bleſſed maſter himſelf has put this matter beyond all poſſible doubt. *Not a ſparrow*, ſaith he, *falleth to the ground without the will of your Father which is in heaven.* Yea (to expreſs the thing more ſtrongly ſtill) *Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

2. But although we are well apprized of this general truth, that all things are governed by the Providence of God, (the very language of the heathen Orator, *Deorum moderamine cuncta geri*) yet how amazingly little do we know, of the particulars contained under this General? How little do we underſtand of his providential dealings, either with regard to nations, or families, or

or individuals? There are heights and depths in all these, which our understanding can in no wise fathom. We can comprehend but a small part of his ways now: the rest we shall know hereafter.

3. Even with regard to intire nations, how little do we comprehend of God's providential dealings with them! What innumerable nations in the Eastern world once flourished, to the terror of all around them, and are now swept away from the face of the earth; and their memorial is perished with them! Nor has the case been otherwise in the West. In *Europe* also we read of many large and powerful kingdoms, of which the names only are left: the people are vanished away, and are as though they had never been. But why it has pleased the Almighty Governor of the world, to sweep them away with the besom of destruction, we cannot tell: those who succeeded them being many times little better than themselves.

4. But it is not only with regard to ancient nations, that the providential dispensations of God, are utterly incomprehensible to us: the same difficulties occur now. We cannot account for his present dealings with the inhabitants of the earth. We know, the Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works. But we know not how to reconcile this with the present dispensations of his providence. At this day is not almost every part of the earth full of darkness and cruel habitations? In what a condition in particular, is the large and populous empire of *Indostan?* How many hundred thousands of the poor, quiet people have been destroyed, and their carcases left as the dung of the

the earth! In what a condition (though they have no Engliſh ruffians there) are the numberleſs iſlands in the Pacific Ocean? How little is their ſtate above that of wolves and bears! And who careth either for their ſouls or their bodies? But does not the Father of men care for them? O myſtery of Providence!

5. And who cares for thouſands, myriads, if not millions of the wretched *Africans?* Are not whole droves of theſe poor ſheep, (human if not rational beings!) continually driven to market, and ſold like cattle into the vileſt bondage, without any hope of deliverance, but by death? Who cares for thoſe outcaſts of men, the well known *Hottentots?* It is true a late writer has taken much pains, to repreſent them as a reſpectable people. But from what motive, it is not eaſy to ſay; ſince he himſelf allows, (a ſpecimen of their elegance of manners) that the raw guts of ſheep and other cattle, are not only ſome of their choiceſt food, but alſo the ornaments of their arms and legs: and (a ſpecimen of their religion) that the ſon is not counted a man, till he has beat his mother almoſt to death. And when his father grows old, he faſtens him in a little hut, and leaves him there to ſtarve! O Father of mercies! Are theſe the works of thy own hands? The purchaſe of thy Son's blood?

6. How little better is either the civil or religious ſtate of the poor *American Indians!* that is, the miſerable remains of them: for in ſome provinces not one of them is left to breathe. In *Hiſpaniola*, when the chriſtians came thither firſt, there were three million of inhabitants. Scarce twelve thouſand of them now ſurvive. And in what condition are theſe? or the other

Indians

Indians who are ſtill ſcattered up and down in the vaſt continent of South or North *America?* Religion they have none: no public worſhip of any kind. God is not in all their thoughts. And moſt of them have no civil government at all; no laws, no magiſtrates: but every man does what is right in his own eyes: therefore they are decreaſing daily. And very probably in a century or two, there will not be one of them left.

7. However, the inhabitants of *Europe*, are not in ſo deplorable a condition. They are in a ſtate of civilization. They have uſeful laws and are governed by magiſtrates. They have religion. They are chriſtians. I am afraid, whether they are called chriſtians or not, many of them have not much religion. What ſay you to thouſands of Laplanders, of Finlanders? Samoeids, and Greenlanders? indeed of all who live in high northern latitudes? Are they as civilized as ſheep or oxen? To compare them with horſes or any of our domeſtic animals, would be doing them too much honour. Add to theſe, myriads of human ſavages, that are freezing among the ſnows of *Siberia:* and as many, if not more, who are wandering up and down in the deſerts of *Tartary*. Add thouſands upon thouſands of Poles and Muſcovites, and of Chriſtians ſo called, from *Turkey in Europe*. And did *God ſo love* theſe, that *he gave his Son his only begotten Son, to the end they might not periſh but have everlaſting life!* Then why are they thus? O wonder above all wonders!

8. Is there not ſomething equally myſterious in the divine diſpenſation, with regard to chriſtianity itſelf? Who can explain why chriſtianity

is

is not ſpread as far as ſin? Why is not the medicine ſent to every place, where the diſeaſe is found? but alas! it is not: *the ſound of it is* not now *gone forth into all lands!* The poiſon is diffuſed over the whole globe: the antidote is not known in a ſixth part of it. Nay, and how is it, that the wiſdom and goodneſs of God ſuffer the antidote itſelf to be ſo grievouſly adulterated, not only in Roman Catholic countries, but almoſt in every part of the chriſtian world? So adulterated by mixing it frequently with uſeleſs, frequently with poiſonous ingredients, that it retains none, or at leaſt, a very ſmall part of its original virtue. Yea, it is ſo thoroughly adulterated by many of thoſe very perſons whom he has ſent to adminiſter it, that it adds tenfold malignity to the diſeaſe, which it was deſigned to cure! In conſequence of this, there is little more mercy or truth, to be found among chriſtians than among Pagans. Nay, it has been affirmed, and I am afraid, truly, that many called chriſtians are far worſe than the heathens that ſurround them: more profligate, more abandoned to all manner of wickedneſs, neither fearing God, nor regarding man! O who can comprehend this! Doth not he that is higher than the higheſt regard it?

9. Equally incomprehenſible to us are many of the divine diſpenſations, with regard to particular families We cannot at all comprehend, why he raiſes ſome to wealth, honour and power: and why in the mean time he depreſſes others, with poverty and various afflictions. Some wonderfully proſpers in all they take in hand, and the world pours in upon them; while others with all their labour and toil can ſcarce procure daily

daily bread. And perhaps prosperity and applause continue with the former to their death; while the latter drink the cup of adversity to their life's end: although no reason appear to us, either for the prosperity of the one, or the adversity of the other.

10. As little can we account for the Divine Dispensations, with regard to *Individuals*. We know not why the lot of this man is cast in *Europe*, the lot of that man in the wilds of *America*: why one is born of rich or noble, the other of poor parents: why the father and mother of one are strong and healthy, those of another weak and diseased; in consequence of which he drags a miserable being all the days of his life, exposed to want and pain, and a thousand temptations, from which he finds no way to escape. How many are from their very infancy hedged in with such relations, that they seem to have no chance (as some speak) no possibility of being useful to themselves or others? Why are they, antecedent to their own choice, entangled in such connexions? Why are hurtful people so cast in their way that they know not how to escape them? And why are useful persons hid out of their sight, or snatched away from them at their utmost need? O God, how unsearchable are thy counsels! Too deep to be fathomed by our reason: *and thy ways* of executing those counsels *not to be traced* by our wisdom!

III. 1. Are we able to search out his works of *grace*, any more than his works of Providence? Nothing is more sure than, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Why is it then, that so vast a majority of mankind, are, so far as we can

can judge, cut off from all means, all poſſibility of holineſs, even from their mother's womb? For inſtance: what poſſibility is there that a *Hottentot*, a *New-Zealander*, or an inhabitant of *Nova Zembla*, if he lives and dies there, ſhould ever know what holineſs means? or conſequently ever attain it? Yea, but one may ſay, "He ſinned before he was born, in a *pre-exiſtent ſtate*. Therefore he was placed here, in ſo unfavourable a ſituation. And it is mere mercy that he ſhould have a ſecond trial." I anſwer, Suppoſing ſuch a pre-exiſtent ſtate, this which you call a ſecond trial, is really no trial at all. As ſoon as he is born into the world, he is abſolutely in the power of his ſavage parents and relations, who from the firſt dawn of reaſon, train him up in the ſame Ignorance, Atheiſm and Barbarity with themſelves. He has no chance, ſo to ſpeak; he has no poſſibility of any better education. What trial has he then? From the time he comes into the world, till he goes out of it again, he ſeems to be under a dire neceſſity of living in all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs. But how is this? How can this be the caſe with ſo many millions of the ſouls that God has made? Art thou not *the God of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad ſea?*

2. I deſire it may be obſerved, that if this be improved into an objection againſt Revelation, it is an objection that lies full as much againſt natural, as revealed Religion. If it were concluſive, it would not drive us into Deiſm, but into flat Atheiſm. It would conclude, not only againſt the Chriſtian Revelation, but againſt the being of a God. And yet I ſee not how we can avoid the force of it, but by reſolving all into the unſearchable

unſearchable wiſdom of God, together with a deep conviction of our own ignorance, and inability to fathom his counſels.

3. Even among us, who are favoured far above theſe, to whom are entruſted the oracles of God, whoſe word is a lanthorn to our feet, and a light in all our paths, there are ſtill many circumſtances in his diſpenſations, which are above our comprehenſion. We know not why he ſuffered us ſo long to go on in our own ways, before we were convinced of ſin. Or why he made uſe of this or the other inſtrument, and in this or the other manner: and a thouſand circumſtances attended the proceſs of our conviction, which we do not comprehend. We know not why he ſuffered us to ſtay ſo long, before he revealed his Son in our hearts: or why this change from darkneſs to light was accompanied with ſuch and ſuch particular circumſtances.

4. It is doubtleſs the peculiar prerogative of God, to reſerve the *times and ſeaſons in his own power*. And we cannot give any reaſon, why of two perſons equally athirſt for ſalvation, one is preſently taken into the favour of God, and the other left to mourn for months or years. One as ſoon as he calls upon God, is anſwered, and filled with peace and joy in believing. Another ſeeks after him, and it ſeems with the ſame degree of ſincerity and earneſtneſs: and yet cannot find him, or any conſciouſneſs of his favour, for weeks, or months, or years. We know well, this cannot poſſibly be owing to any abſolute decree, conſigning one before he was born, to everlaſting glory, and the other to everlaſting fire. But we do not know, what is the reaſon for it: it is enough that God knoweth.

5. There is likewiſe great variety in the manner and time of God's beſtowing his *Sanctifying Grace;* whereby he enables his children to give him their whole heart, which we can in no wiſe account for. We know not why he beſtows this on ſome, even before they aſk for it: (ſome unqueſtionable inſtances of which we have ſeen,) on ſome after they had ſought it but a few days: and yet permits other believers to wait for it, perhaps twenty, thirty or forty years: nay, and others till a few hours or even minutes, before their ſpirits return to him. For the various circumſtances alſo, which attend the fulfilling of that great promiſe, *I will circumciſe thy heart, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul.* God undoubtedly has reaſons: but thoſe reaſons are generally hid from the children of men. Once more. Some of thoſe who are enabled to love God with all their heart and with all their ſoul, retain the ſame bleſſing without any interruption, till they are carried to Abraham's boſom. Others do not retain it, although they are not conſcious of having grieved the Holy Spirit of God. This alſo we do not underſtand: we do not herein *know the mind of the Spirit.*

IV. Several valuable leſſons we may learn, from a deep conſciouſneſs of this our own ignorance. Firſt, we may learn hence, a leſſon of humility: not to think of ourſelves, particularly with regard to our underſtanding, *more highly than we ought to think;* but *to think ſoberly:* being thoroughly convinced, that we are not ſufficient of ourſelves to think one good thought: that we ſhould be liable

liable to ſtumble at every ſtep, to err every moment of our lives, were it not, that we have *an anointing from the Holy One*, which abideth *with us*: were it not that he who knoweth what is in man, helpeth our infirmities: that *there is a ſpirit in man which giveth* wiſdom, and the inſpiration of the Holy One which giveth underſtanding.

From hence we may learn, ſecondly, a leſſon of faith, of confidence in God. A full conviction of our own ignorance may teach us a full truſt in his wiſdom. It may teach us, (what is not always ſo eaſy as one would conceive it to be) to truſt the inviſible God, farther than we can ſee him! It may aſſiſt us in learning that difficult leſſon, to *caſt down* our own *imaginations* (or *reaſonings* rather, as the word properly ſignifies) to "caſt down every high thing, that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt." There are at preſent two grand obſtructions to our forming a right judgment of the dealings of God with reſpect to men. The one is, there are innumerable *facts* relating to every man which we do not and cannot know. They are at preſent hid from us, and covered from our ſearch by impenetrable darkneſs. The other is, we cannot ſee *the thoughts* of men, even when we know their actions. Still we know not their *intentions*; and without this, we can but ill judge of their outward actions. Conſcious of this, *judge nothing before the time*, concerning his Providential Diſpenſations: till he ſhall bring to light the *hidden things of darkneſs*, and manifeſt *the thoughts and intents of the heart*.

From a conſciouſneſs of our ignorance we may learn, thirdly, a leſſon of reſignation. We may be inſtructed to ſay at all times and in all inſtances, *Father not as I will; but as thou wilt.* This was the laſt leſſon which our bleſſed Lord (as man) learned while he was upon earth. He could go no higher than, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, till he bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt. Let us alſo herein be made conformable to his death, that we may know the full *power of his reſurrection.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXII.

THE CASE OF REASON IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 20.

Brethren, be not children in underſtanding: in wickedneſs be ye children; but in underſtanding be ye men.

1. IT is the true remark of an eminent man, who had made many obſervations on human nature, "If reaſon be againſt a man, a man will always be againſt reaſon." This has been confirmed by the experience of all ages. Very many have been the inſtances of it in the chriſtian, as well as the heathen world: yea, and that in the earlieſt times. Even then there were not wanting well-meaning men, who not having much reaſon themſelves, imagined that reaſon was of no uſe in religion: yea, rather, that it was a hindrance to it. And there has not been

wanting a ſucceſſion of men, who have believed and aſſerted the ſame thing. But never was there a greater number of theſe in the Chriſtian Church, at leaſt in *Britain*, than at this day.

2. Among them that deſpiſe and vilify reaſon, you may always expect to find thoſe Enthuſiaſts, who ſuppoſe the dreams of their own imagination to be revelations from God. We cannot expect, that men of this turn will pay much regard to reaſon. Having an infallible guide, they are very little moved by the reaſonings of fallible men. In the foremoſt of theſe we commonly find the whole herd of Antinomians; all that, however they may differ in other reſpects, agree in *making void the law through faith.* If you oppoſe reaſon to theſe, when they are aſſerting propoſitions ever ſo full of abſurdity and blaſphemy, they will probably think it a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, "O, this is your reaſon!" Or, your carnal reaſon. So that all arguments are loſt upon them: they regard them no more than ſtubble or rotten wood.

3. How natural is it for thoſe who obſerve this extreme, to run into the contrary! While they are ſtrongly impreſſed with the abſurdity of undervaluing reaſon, how apt are they to over-value it! So much eaſier it is to run from Eaſt to Weſt, than to ſtop at the middle point! Accordingly we are ſurrounded with thoſe, (we find them on every ſide,) who lay it down as an undoubted principle, that reaſon is the higheſt gift of God. They paint it in the faireſt colours: they extol it to the ſkies. They are fond of expatiating in its praiſe: they make it little leſs than divine. They are wont to deſcribe it as very near, if not quite infallible. They look upon it as the all-

ſufficient

ſufficient Director of all the children of men; able by its native light to guide them into all truth, and lead them into all virtue.

4. They that are prejudiced againſt the Chriſtian revelation, who do not receive the Scriptures as the Oracles of God, almoſt univerſally run into this extreme. I have ſcarce known any exception: ſo do all, by whatever name they are called, who deny the Godhead of Chriſt. (Indeed ſome of theſe ſay, they do not deny his Godhead, but only his Supreme Godhead. Nay, this is the ſame thing: for in denying him to be the Supreme God, they deny him to be any God at all: unleſs they will aſſert that there are two Gods, a great one and a little one!) All theſe are vehement applauders of reaſon, as the great unerring guide. To theſe over-valuers of reaſon we may generally add, men of eminently ſtrong underſtanding; who, becauſe they do know more than moſt other men, ſuppoſe they can know all things. But we may likewiſe add many who are in the other extreme, men of eminently weak underſtanding: men in whom pride (a very common caſe) ſupplies the void of ſenſe: who do not ſuſpect themſelves to be blind, becauſe they were always ſo.

5. Is there then no medium between theſe extremes, under-valuing and over-valuing reaſon? Certainly there is. But who is there to point it out? To mark down the middle way? That great Maſter of Reaſon, Mr. Locke, has done ſomething of the kind, ſomething applicable to it, in one chapter of his Eſſay concerning Human Underſtanding. But it is only remotely applicable to this: he does not come home to the point. The good and great Dr. Watts has wrote admirably

rably well, both concerning reaſon and faith. But neither does any thing he has written point out the medium between valuing it too little and too much.

6. I would gladly endeavour in ſome degree to ſupply this grand defect: to point out, firſt, to the undervaluers of it, what reaſon can do: and then to the overvaluers of it, what reaſon cannot do.

But before either the one or the other can be done, it is abſolutely neceſſary to define the term, to fix the preciſe meaning of the word in queſtion. Unleſs this is done, men may diſpute to the end of the world, without coming to any good concluſion. This is one great cauſe of the numberleſs altercations which have been on the ſubject. Very few of the diſputants thought of this; of defining the word they were diſputing about. The natural conſequence was, they were juſt as far from an agreement at the end, as at the beginning.

I. 1. Firſt then, *reaſon* is ſometimes taken for *argument*. So, "Give me a *reaſon* for your aſſertion." So in Iſaiah, *Bring forth your ſtrong reaſons*; that is, your ſtrong *arguments*. We uſe the word nearly in the ſame ſenſe when we ſay, "He has good *reaſons* for what he does." It ſeems here to mean, He has ſufficient *motives*, ſuch as ought to influence a wiſe man. But how is the word to be underſtood, in the celebrated queſtion concerning the *reaſons of things?* Particularly when it is aſked, *An Rationes rerum ſint æternæ?* Whether the reaſons of things are eternal? Do not the *reaſons of things* here mean, The *relations* of things to each other? But

But what are the *eternal relations* of *temporal* things? Of things which did not exist till yesterday? Could the relations of these things exist, before the things themselves had any existence? Is not then the talking of such relations a flat contradiction? Yea, as palpable a one as can be put into words.

2. In another acceptation of the word, reason is much the same with *understanding*: it means a faculty of the human soul: that faculty which exerts itself, in three ways, by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind, the first and most simple act of the understanding. *Judgment* is, the determining that the things before conceived either agree with, or differ from each other. *Discourse* (strictly speaking) is the motion or progress of the mind, from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations, I here mean by the term *reason*.

3. Taking the word in this sense, let us now impartially consider, first, What it is that reason can do? And who can deny that it can do much, very much in the affairs of common life? To begin at the lowest point, it can direct servants how to perform the various works wherein they are employed; to discharge their duty either in the meanest offices, or in any of a higher nature. It can direct the Husbandman at what time, and in what manner to cultivate his ground; to plow, to sow, to reap, to bring in his corn, to breed and manage his cattle, and to act with prudence and propriety in every part of his employment. It can direct Artificers how to prepare the various sorts of apparel, and the thousand necessaries and conveniencies

conveniencies of life, not only for themſelves and their houſholds, but for their neighbours, whether nigh or afar off. It can direct thoſe of higher abilities, to plan and execute works of a more elegant kind. It can direct the Painter, the Statuary, the Muſician, to excel in the ſtations wherein Providence has placed them. It can direct the Mariner to ſteer his courſe over the boſom of the great deep. It enables thoſe who ſtudy the Laws of their Country, to defend the property or life of their fellow-ſubjects: and thoſe who ſtudy the Art of Healing, to cure moſt of the maladies, to which we are expoſed in our preſent ſtate.

4. To aſcend higher ſtill; it is certain, reaſon can aſſiſt us in going through the whole circle of Arts and Sciences: of Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Natural and Moral Philoſophy, Mathematics, Algebra, Metaphyſics. It can teach whatever the ſkill or induſtry of man has invented for ſome thouſand years. It is abſolutely neceſſary for the due diſcharge of the moſt important offices: ſuch as thoſe of Magiſtrates, whether of an inferior or ſuperior rank: and thoſe of ſubordinate or ſupreme Governors, whether of ſtates, provinces, or kingdoms.

5. All this, few men in their ſenſes will deny. No thinking man can doubt, but reaſon is of conſiderable ſervice, in all things relating to the preſent world. But ſuppoſe we ſpeak of higher things, the things of another world: what can reaſon do here? Is it a help or a hindrance of religion? It may do much in the affairs of men. But what can it do in the things of God?

6. This is a point that deſerves to be deeply conſidered. If you aſk, What can reaſon do in religion?

religion? I anſwer, It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the foundation of it, and the ſuperſtructure.

The foundation of true religion ſtands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the Prophets and Apoſtles, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner-ſtone. Now of what excellent uſe is reaſon, if we would either underſtand ourſelves, or explain to others, thoſe living Oracles? And how is it poſſible without it to underſtand the eſſential truths contained therein? A beautiful ſummary of which we have, in that which is called the Apoſtles' Creed. Is it not reaſon (aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt) which enables us to underſtand, what the holy Scriptures declare, concerning the being and attributes of God? concerning his eternity and immenſity, his power, wiſdom and holineſs? It is by reaſon that God enables us, in ſome meaſure to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various diſpenſations, of the Old and New Covenant, of the Law and the Goſpel. It is by this we underſtand (his ſpirit opening and enlightening the eyes of our underſtanding) what that repentance is, not to be repented of; what is that faith whereby we are ſaved; what is the nature and the condition of juſtification: what are the immediate, and what the ſubſequent fruits of it. By reaſon we learn what is that New-Birth, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, and what that holineſs is, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord. By the due uſe of reaſon we come to know, what are the tempers implied in inward holineſs: and what it is to be outwardly holy; holy in all manner of converſation: in other words, What is the mind

mind that was in Chriſt, and what it is to walk as Chriſt walked.

7. Many particular caſes will occur, with reſpect to ſeveral of the foregoing articles, in which we ſhall have occaſion for all our underſtanding, if we would keep a conſcience void of offence. Many caſes of conſcience are not to be ſolved, without the utmoſt exerciſe of our reaſon. The ſame is requiſite in order to underſtand, and to diſcharge our ordinary relative duties; the duties of parents and children, of huſbands and wives, and (to name no more) of maſters and ſervants. In all theſe reſpects, and in all the duties of common life, God has given us our reaſon for a guide. And it is only by acting up to the dictates of it, by uſing all the underſtanding which God hath given us, that we can have a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man.

8. Here then there is a large field indeed, wherein reaſon may expatiate and exerciſe all its powers. And if reaſon can do all this, both in civil and religious things, what is it that it cannot do?

We have hitherto endeavoured to lay aſide all prejudice, and to weigh the matter calmly and impartially. The ſame courſe let us take ſtill: let us now coolly conſider, without prepoſſeſſion on any ſide, what it is, according to the beſt light we have, that reaſon cannot do?

II. 1. And, firſt, reaſon cannot produce faith. Although it is always conſiſtent with reaſon, yet reaſon cannot produce faith, in the ſcriptural ſenſe of the word. Faith, according to ſcripture, is "an evidence or conviction of things not ſeen."

It

It is a divine evidence, bringing a full conviction of an invisible, eternal world. It is true, there was a kind of shadowy persuasion of this, even among the wiser Heathens, (probably from tradition, or from some gleams of light, reflected from the Israelites.) Hence many hundred years before our Lord was born, the Greek Poet uttered that great truth,

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

But this was little more than faint conjecture. It was far from a firm conviction: which reason in its highest state of improvement could never produce in any child of man.

2. Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments, which I could find either in antient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world; I have wandered up and down, musing with myself: what if all these things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What if that melancholy supposition of the old Poet, be the real case?

Οιη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιηδε και ανδρων.

What if the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves? If the earth drops its successive inhabitants, just as the tree drops its leaves? What if that saying of a great man be really true,

Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil?

"Death is nothing, and nothing is after Death?"

How am I ſure that this is not the caſe? That I have not followed cunningly deviſed fables? And I have purſued the thought, till there was no ſpirit in me, and I was ready to chuſe ſtrangling rather than life.

3. But in a point of ſo unſpeakable importance, do not depend on the word of another; but retire for awhile from the buſy world, and make the experiment yourſelf. Try whether *your* reaſon will give you a clear, ſatisfactory evidence of the inviſible world. After the prejudices of education are laid aſide, produce your ſtrong reaſons for the exiſtence of this. Set them all in array; ſilence all objections, and put all your doubts to flight. Alas, you cannot with all your underſtanding. You may repreſs them for a ſeaſon. But how quickly will they rally again, and attack you with redoubled violence? And what can poor reaſon do for your deliverance? The more vehemently you ſtruggle, the more deeply you are entangled in the toils. And you find no way to eſcape.

4. How was the caſe with that great admirer of reaſon, the author of the maxim above cited? I mean, the famous Mr. *Hobbes*. None will deny, that he had a ſtrong underſtanding. But did it produce in him a full and ſatisfactory conviction of an inviſible world? Did it open the eyes of his underſtanding, to ſee

"Beyond the bounds of this diurnal ſphere?"

O no! Far from it! His dying words ought never to be forgotten. "Where are you going, Sir," ſaid one of his friends. He anſwered, "I am taking a leap in the dark," and died. Juſt ſuch an evidence of the inviſible world can bare reaſon give to the wiſeſt of men!

5. Secondly,

5. Secondly, Reaſon alone cannot produce hope in any child of man: I mean ſcriptural hope, whereby we *rejoice in hope of the glory of God:* that hope which St. *Paul* in one place terms, *taſting of the powers of the world to come:* in another, the *ſitting in heavenly places with Chriſt Jeſus.* That which enables us to ſay, "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope—To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reſerved in heaven for us." This hope can only ſpring from chriſtian faith: therefore where there is not faith, there is not hope. Conſequently reaſon being unable to produce faith, muſt be equally unable to produce hope. Experience confirms this likewiſe. How often have I laboured, and that with my might, to beget this hope in myſelf? But it was loſt labour: I could no more acquire this hope of heaven, than I could touch heaven with my hand. And whoever of you makes the ſame attempt, will find it attended with the ſame ſucceſs I do not deny, that a ſelf-deceiving Enthuſiaſt may work in himſelf a kind of hope. He may work himſelf up into a lively imagination, into a ſort of pleaſing dream. He may *compaſs himſelf about,* as the prophet ſpeaks, *with ſparks of his own kindling.* But this cannot be of long continuance, in a little while the bubble will ſurely break. And what will follow? *This ſhall ye have at my hand, ſaith the Lord, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow.*

6. If reaſon could have produced a hope full of immortality in any child of man, it might have produced it in that great man, whom *Juſtin Martyr* ſcruples not to call, "a Chriſtian before

Chriſt." For who that was not favoured with the written word of God, ever excelled, yea, or equalled *Socrates?* In what other heathen can we find ſo ſtrong an underſtanding joined with ſo conſummate virtue? But had he really this hope? Let him anſwer for himſelf. What is the concluſion of that noble apology, which he made before his unrighteous judges? "And now, O judges, ye are going hence, to live: and I am going hence, to die. Which of theſe is beſt, the gods know: but I ſuppoſe, no man does." No man knows! How far is this from the language of the little Benjamite? *I deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt: for it is far better.* And how many thouſands are there at this day, even in our own nation, young men and maidens, old men and children, who are able to witneſs the ſame good confeſſion?

7. But who is able to do this, by the force of his reaſon, be it ever ſo highly improved? One of the moſt ſenſible and moſt amiable Heathens that have lived ſince our Lord died, even though he governed the greateſt empire in the world, was the Emperor *Adrian.* It is his well-known ſaying, "A Prince ought to reſemble the ſun; he ought to ſhine on every part of his dominion, and to diffuſe his ſalutary rays, in every place where he comes." And his life was a comment upon his word: wherever he went, he was executing juſtice and ſhewing mercy. Was not he then at the cloſe of a long life, full of immortal hope? We are able to anſwer this from unqueſtionable authority, from his own dying words. How inimitably pathetic!

Adriani morientis ad animam ſuam.

Dying

Dying *Adrian* to his ſoul:

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hoſpes, comeſque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut ſoles, dabis jocos!

Which the Engliſh reader may ſee tranſlated into our own language, with all the ſpirit of the original.

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Muſt we no longer live together?
And doſt thou prune thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight thou knoweſt not whither?

Thy pleaſing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And penſive, wavering melancholy,
Thou hop'ſt, and fear'ſt, thou know'ſt not what."

8. Thirdly, Reaſon however cultivated and improved, cannot produce the love of God; which is plain from hence: it cannot produce either faith or hope, from which alone this love can flow. It is then only, when we *behold* by faith, *what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us*, in giving his only Son, that we might not perith but have everlaſting life, that *the love of God is ſhed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto us.* It is only then, when we *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, that *we love him, becauſe he firſt loved us.* But what can cold reaſon do in this matter? It may preſent us with fair ideas: it can draw a fine picture of love: but this is only a painted fire! And farther than this, reaſon cannot go. I made the trial for many years. I collected the fineſt hymns,

prayers and meditations, which I could find in any language: and I said, sung or read them over and over, with all possible seriousness and attention. But still I was like the bones in Ezekiel's vision: "the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them."

9. And as reason cannot produce the love of God, so neither can it produce the love of our neighbour, a calm, generous, disinterested benevolence to every child of man. This earnest, steady good-will to our fellow-creatures, never flowed from any fountain but gratitude to our Creator. And if this be (as a very ingenious man supposes) the very essence of virtue, it follows that virtue can have no being, unless it spring from the love of God. Therefore as reason cannot produce this love, so neither can it produce virtue.

10. And as it cannot give either faith, hope, love or virtue, so it cannot give happiness, since separate from these, there can be no happiness for any intelligent creature. It is true, those who are void of all virtue, may have pleasures such as they are: but happiness they have not, cannot have. No:

"Their joy is all sadness,
Their mirth is all vain:
Their laughter is madness;
Their pleasure is pain!"

Pleasures? Shadows? Dreams? fleeting as the wind; unsubstantial as the rainbow? As unsatisfying to the poor, gasping soul,

"As the gay colours of an Eastern cloud."

None of these will stand the test of reflection: if thought comes, the bubble breaks.

Suffer

Suffer me now to add a few, plain words, firſt to you who undervalue reaſon. Never more declaim in that wild, looſe, ranting manner, againſt this precious gift of God. Acknowledge *the candle of the Lord*, which he hath fixed in our ſouls for excellent purpoſes. You ſee how many admirable ends it anſwers, were it only in the things of this life: of what unſpeakable uſe is even a moderate ſhare of reaſon, in all our worldly employments, from the loweſt and meaneſt offices of life, through all the intermediate branches of buſineſs, till we aſcend to thoſe that are of the higheſt importance and the greateſt difficulty. When therefore you deſpiſe or deprecate reaſon, you muſt not imagine you are doing God ſervice; leaſt of all, are you promoting the cauſe of God, when you are endeavouring to exclude reaſon out of religion. Unleſs you wilfully ſhut your eyes, you cannot but ſee, of what ſervice it is, both in laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in raiſing the ſuperſtructure. You ſee, it directs us in every point, both of faith and practice: it guides us with regard to every branch both of inward and outward holineſs. Do we not glory in this that the whole of our religion is a *reaſonable ſervice?* Yea, and that every part of it, when it is duly performed, is the higheſt exerciſe of our underſtanding.

Permit me to add a few words to you likewiſe, who over-value reaſon. Why ſhould you run from one extreme to the other? Is not the middle way beſt? Let reaſon do all that reaſon can: employ it as far as it will go. But at the ſame time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable, of giving either faith, or hope, or love: and conſequently,

fequently, of producing either real virtue, or fubftantial happinefs. Expect thefe from a higher fource, even from the Father of the fpirits of all flefh. Seek and receive them, not as your own acquifition, but as the gift of God. Lift up your hearts to him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. He alone can give that faith which is the evidence and *conviction of things not feen.* He alone can *beget you unto a lively hope* of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. And he alone can *fhed his love abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghoft given unto you.* Afk therefore, and it fhall be given you: cry unto him, and you fhall not cry in vain. How can you doubt? "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more fhall your Father who is in heaven, give the Holy Ghoft unto them that afk him? So fhall you be living witneffes that wifdom, holinefs, and happinefs are one, are infeparably united: and are indeed the beginning of that *eternal life, which God hath given us in his Son.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXIII.

OF GOOD ANGELS.

HEBREWS i. 14.

Are they not all miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter unto them that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?

1. MANY of the ancient Heathens had (probably from tradition) ſome notion of good and evil angels. They had ſome conception of a ſuperior order of beings, between men and God, whom the Greeks generally termed Demons (knowing ones,) and the Romans Genii. Some of theſe they ſuppoſed to be kind and benevolent, delighting in doing good; others to be malicious and cruel, delighting in doing evil. But their conceptions both of one and the other, were crude, imperfect and confuſed; being only fragments of truth, partly delivered down by their fore-fathers, and partly borrowed from the inſpired writings.

2. Of

2. Of the former, the benevolent kind, ſeems to have been the celebrated Demon of Socrates, concerning which ſo many and ſo various conjectures have been made in ſucceeding ages. This gives me notice, ſaid he, every morning, of any evil which will befal me that day. A late writer, indeed (I ſuppoſe one that hardly believes the exiſtence of either angel or ſpirit) has publiſhed a diſſertation wherein he labours to prove, That the Demon of Socrates was only his reaſon. But it was not the manner of Socrates to ſpeak in ſuch obſcure and ambiguous terms. If he had meant his reaſon he would doubtleſs have ſaid ſo: but this could not be his meaning. For it was impoſſible his reaſon ſhould give him notice every morning, of every evil which would befal him that day. It does not lie within the province of reaſon, to give ſuch notice of future contingencies. Neither does this odd interpretation in any wiſe agree with the inference which he himſelf draws from it. "My Demon, ſays he, did not give me notice this morning of any evil that was to befal me to-day. Therefore I cannot regard as any evil, my being condemned to die." Undoubtedly it was ſome ſpiritual being: probably one of thoſe miniſtering ſpirits.

3. An ancient Poet, one who lived ſeveral ages before Socrates, ſpeaks more determinately on this ſubject. Heſiod does not ſcruple to ſay,

> "Millions of ſpiritual creatures walk the earth unſeen."

Hence, it is probable, aroſe the numerous tales about the exploits of their demigods *minorum Gentium*. Hence their Satyrs, Fauns, Nymphs of every kind, wherewith they ſuppoſed both the

the ſea and land to be filled. But how empty, childiſh, unſatisfactory, are all the accounts they give of them! as indeed accounts that depend upon broken, uncertain tradition, can hardly fail to be.

4. Revelation only is able to ſupply this defect; this only gives us a clear, rational, conſiſtent account, of thoſe whom our eyes have not ſeen, nor our ears heard: of both good and evil angels. It is my deſign to ſpeak at preſent only of the former, of whom we have a full, though brief account in theſe words. "Are they not all miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter unto them that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?

I. 1. The queſtion is, according to the manner of the Apoſtle, equivalent to a ſtrong affirmation. And hence we learn, First, that with regard to their eſſence or nature, they are all ſpirits; not material beings; not clogged with fleſh and blood like us; but having bodies, if any, not groſs and earthly like ours, but of a finer ſubſtance, reſembling fire or flame, more than any other of theſe lower elements. And is not ſomething like this, intimated in thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, *Who maketh his angels ſpirits, and his miniſters a flame of fire!* Pſalm civ. 4. As ſpirits he has endued them with underſtanding, will or affections, (which are indeed the ſame thing, as the affections are only the will exerting itſelf various ways) and liberty. And are not theſe, underſtanding, will, and liberty, eſſential to, if not the eſſence of a ſpirit?

2. But who of the children of men can comprehend, what is the *underſtanding* of an angel? Who can comprehend how far their ſight extends?

tends? Analogous to ſight in men, though not the ſame; but this we are conſtrained to ſpeak through the poverty of human language! Probably not only over one hemiſphere of the earth, yea, or

"Tenfold the length of their Terrene,"

or even of the Solar Syſtem; but ſo far as to take in one view, the whole extent of the Creation. And we cannot conceive any defect in their perception, neither any error in their underſtanding. But in what manner do they uſe their underſtanding? We muſt in no wiſe imagine, that they creep from one truth to another, by that ſlow method which we call reaſoning. Undoubtedly they ſee at one glance whatever truth is preſented to their underſtanding: and that with all the certainty and clearneſs, that we mortals ſee the moſt ſelf-evident axiom. Who then can conceive the extent of their *knowledge?* Not only of the nature, attributes and works of God, (whether of creation or providence) but of the circumſtances, actions, words, tempers, yea and thoughts of men. For although *God* only *knows the hearts of all men* (*unto whom known are all his works*) together with the changes they undergo, *from the beginning of the world*: yet we cannot doubt but his angels know the hearts of thoſe to whom they more immediately miniſter. Much leſs can we doubt of their knowing the thoughts that are in our hearts at any particular time. What ſhould hinder their ſeeing them as they ariſe? Not the thin veil of fleſh and blood! Can theſe intercept the view of a ſpirit? Nay,

"Walls

"Walls within walls no more its paſſage bar,
Than unoppoſing ſpace of liquid air."

Far more eaſily then, and far more perfectly than we can read a man's thoughts in his face, do theſe ſagacious beings read our thoughts, juſt as they riſe in our hearts: inaſmuch as they ſee the kindred ſpirit, more clearly than we ſee the body. If this ſeem ſtrange to any, who had not adverted to it before, let him only conſider, Suppoſe my ſpirit was out of the body, could not an angel ſee my thoughts? Even without my uttering any words? (If words are uſed in the world of ſpirits.) And cannot that miniſtering ſpirit ſee them juſt as well now I am in the body? It ſeems therefore to be an unqueſtionable truth, (although perhaps not commonly obſerved,) That angels know not only the words and actions, but alſo the thoughts of thoſe to whom they miniſter. And indeed without this knowledge they would be very ill qualified to perform various parts of their miniſtry.

3. And what an inconceivable degree of *wiſdom* muſt they have acquired, by the uſe of their amazing faculties, over and above that with which they were originally endued, in the courſe of more than ſix thouſand years. (That they have exiſted ſo long, we are aſſured: for they *ſang together when the foundations of the earth were laid.*) How immenſely muſt their wiſdom have increaſed, during ſo long a period, not only by ſurveying the hearts and ways of men in their ſucceſſive generations: but by obſerving the works of God, his works of Creation, his works of Providence; his works of Grace! And above

all, by *continually beholding the face of* their *Father which is in heaven?*

4. What measures of *holiness*, as well as wisdom, have they derived from this inexhaustible Ocean!

"A boundless, fathomless abyss,
Without a bottom, or a shore!"

Are they not hence, by way of eminence, styled *the holy angels?* What goodness, what philantrophy, what love to man, have they drawn from those rivers that are at his right hand? Such as we cannot conceive to be exceeded by any but That of God our Saviour. And they are still drinking in more love from this *fountain of living water.*

5. Such is the knowledge and wisdom of the angels of God, as we learn from his own Oracles. Such are their holiness and goodness! And how astonishing is their *strength?* Even a fallen angel is styled by an inspired writer, *The prince of the power of the air.* How terrible a proof did he give of this power, in suddenly raising the whirlwind, which *smote the four corners of the house*, and destroyed all the children of Job at once? (chap. 5.) That this was his work, we may easily learn from the command to *save his life.* But he gave a far more terrible proof of his strength, if we suppose that *messinger of the Lord* to have been an evil angel, as is not at all improbable) when he smote with death a hundred, fourscore and five thousand Assyrians, in one night, nay, possibly in one hour, if not one moment. Yet a strength abundantly greater than this must have been exerted by that angel (whether he was an angel of light or of darkness, which

which is not determined by the text) who *ſmote* in one hour, *all the firſt born of Egypt, both of man and beaſt.* For conſidering the extent of the land of Egypt, the immenſe populouſneſs thereof, and the innumerable cattle fed in their houſes, and grazing in their fruitful fields: the men and beaſts who were ſlain in that night, muſt have amounted to ſeveral millions! And if this be ſuppoſed to have been an evil angel, muſt not a good angel be as ſtrong, yea, ſtronger than him? For ſurely any good angel muſt have more power than even an "Archangel ruined." And what power muſt the *four angels* in the Revelation have, who were appointed to *keep the four winds of heaven?* There ſeems therefore no extravagance in ſuppoſing, that if God were pleaſed to permit, any of the angels of light could heave the earth, and all the planets out of their orbits: yea that he "could arm himſelf with all theſe elements," and cruſh the whole frame of nature. Indeed we do not know how to ſet any bounds to the ſtrength of theſe firſt-born children of God.

6. And although none but their great Creator is omnipreſent; although none beſide him can aſk, *Do not I fill heaven and earth?* Yet undoubtedly he has given an immenſe ſphere of action, (though not unbounded) to created ſpirits. *The prince of the kingdom of Perſia,* (mentioned Dan. x. 13.) though probably an evil angel, ſeems to have had a ſphere of action, both of knowledge and power, as extenſive as that vaſt empire. And the ſame, if not greater, we may reaſonably aſcribe to the good angel, whom he withſtood for one and twenty days.

7. The angels of God have great power, in particular over the human body; power either to cauſe or remove pain and diſeaſes; either to kill or to heal. They perfectly well underſtand whereof we are made: they know all the ſprings of this curious machine; and can doubtleſs, by God's permiſſion, touch any of them, ſo as either to ſtop or reſtore its motion. Of this power even in an evil angel, we have a clear inſtance in the caſe of *Job*, whom he *ſmote with ſore boils* all over, *from the crown* of the head *to the ſole of the foot*. And in that inſtant undoubtedly he would have killed him, if God had not *ſaved his life*. And on the other hand, of the power of angels to heal, we have a remarkable inſtance in the caſe of Daniel. There remained no *ſtrength in me*, ſaid the prophet; *neither was there breath in me. Then one came and touched me, and ſaid, Peace be unto thee: be ſtrong, yea, be ſtrong. And when he had ſpoken unto me, I was ſtrengthened*, verſe 17, &c. On the other hand, when they are commiſſioned from above, may they not put a period to human life? There is nothing improbable, in what Dr. *Parnell* ſuppoſes the angel to ſay to the Hermit concerning the death of the child,

"To all but thee in fits he ſeem'd to go:
And 'twas my miniſtry to deal the blow."

From this great truth the heathen Poets probably derived their imagination, that Iris uſed to be ſent down from heaven, to diſcharge ſouls out of their bodies. And perhaps the ſudden death of many of the children of God, may be owing to the miniſtry of an angel.

III. So

III. So perfectly are the angels of God qualified for their high office. It remains to enquire, How they discharge their office? How do they minister to the heirs of salvation?

1. I will not say that they do not minister at all, to those who through their obstinate impenitence and unbelief, disinherit themselves of the kingdom. This world is a world of mercy, wherein God pours down many mercies even on the evil and the unthankful. And many of these, it is probable, are conveyed even to them, by the ministry of angels: especially so long as they have any thought of God, or any fear of God before their eyes. But it is their favourite employ, their peculiar office, to minister to the heirs of salvation; to those who are now *saved by faith*, or at least seeking God in sincerity.

2. Is it not their first care, to minister to our souls? But we must not expect this will be done *with observation:* in such a manner as that we may clearly distinguish their working from the workings of our own minds. We have no more reason to look for this, than for their appearing in a visible shape. Without this they can, in a thousand ways, apply to our understanding. They may assist us in our search after truth, remove many doubts and difficulties, throw light on what was before dark and obscure, and confirm us in the truth that is after godliness. They may warn us of evil in disguise, and place what is good in a clear, strong light. They may gently move our will, to embrace what is good, and fly from that which is evil. They may many times quicken our dull affections, increase our holy hope or filial fear, and assist us more

ardently to love *him*, who has firſt loved *us*. Yea they may be ſent of God to anſwer that whole prayer, put into our mouths by pious Biſhop *Kean*,

" O may thy angels while I ſleep,
Around my bed their vigils keep;
Their love angelical inſtil;
Stop ev'ry avenue of ill.

" May they celeſtial joys rehearſe,
And thought to thought with me converſe!"

Although the manner of this we ſhall not be able to explain, while we dwell in the body.

3. May they not miniſter alſo to us, with reſpect to our bodies, in a thouſand ways, which we do not now underſtand? They may prevent our falling into many dangers, which we are not ſenſible of; and may deliver us out of many others, though we know not whence our deliverance comes. How many times have we been ſtrangely, and unaccountably preſerved, in ſudden and dangerous falls? And it is well if we did not impute that preſervation to chance, or to our own wiſdom or ſtrength. Not ſo: it was God gave his angels charge over us, and in their hands they bore us up. Indeed men of the world will always impute ſuch deliverances, to accident or ſecond cauſes. To theſe poſſibly ſome of them might have imputed Daniel's preſervation in the lions' den. But himſelf aſcribes it to the true cauſe, *My God has ſent his angel, and ſhut the mouths of the lions.* Daniel vi. 22.

4. When a violent diſeaſe, ſuppoſed incurable, is totally and ſuddenly removed, it is by no means improbable, that this is effected by the miniſtry of an angel. And perhaps it is owing to the ſame cauſe,

cauſe, that a remedy is unaccountably ſuggeſted, either to the ſick perſon, or ſome attending upon him, by which he is entirely cured.

5. It ſeems, what are uſually called divine dreams, may be frequently aſcribed to angels. We have a remarkable inſtance of this kind related, by one that will hardly be thought an Enthuſiaſt; for he was a Heathen, a Philoſopher, and an Emperor: I mean Marcus Antonius. In his Meditations, he ſolemnly thanks God for revealing to him, when he was at Cajeta, in a dream, what totally cured the bloody Flux, which none of his Phyſicians were able to heal. And why may we not ſuppoſe, that God gave him this notice, by the miniſtry of an angel!

6. And how often does God deliver us from evil men by the miniſtry of his angels? Overturning whatever their rage, or malice, or ſubtilty had plotted againſt us. Theſe are about their bed and about their path, and privy to all their dark deſigns: and many of them undoubtedly they brought to nought, by means that we think not of. Sometimes they blaſt their favourite ſchemes in the beginning: ſometimes when they are juſt ripe for execution. And this they can do by a thouſand means, that we are not aware of. They can check them in their mid-career, by bereaving them of courage or ſtrength; by ſtriking aimleſs through their loins, or turning their wiſdom into fooliſhneſs. Sometimes they bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and ſhew us the traps that are laid for our feet. In theſe and various other ways, they hew the ſnares of the ungodly in pieces.

7. Another grand branch of their miniſtry is, to counter-work evil angels: who are continually going

going about, not only as roaring lions, ſeeking whom they may devour; but more dangerouſly ſtill, as angels of light, ſeeking whom they may deceive. And how great is the number of theſe! Are they not as the ſtars of heaven for multitude! How great is their ſubtilty! Matured by the experience of above ſix thouſand years. How great is their ſtrength? Only inferior to that of the angels of God. The ſtrongeſt of the ſons of men, are but as graſshoppers before them. And what an advantage have they over us by that ſingle circumſtance, that they are inviſible? As we have not ſtrength to repel their force, ſo we have not ſkill to decline it. But the merciful Lord hath not given us up to the will of our enemies. *His eyes*, that is, his holy angels, *run to and fro over all the earth.* And if our eyes were opened we ſhould ſee, *they are more that are for us, than they that are againſt us.* We ſhould ſee,

"A convoy attends,
A miniſt'ring hoſt of inviſible friends."

And whenever thoſe aſſault us in ſoul or in body, theſe are able, willing, ready to defend us: who are at leaſt equally ſtrong, equally wiſe, and equally vigilant. And who can hurt us, while we have armies of angels, and the God of angels on our ſide?

8. And we may make one general obſervation: whatever aſſiſtance God gives to men by men, the ſame, and frequently in a higher degree, he gives to them by angels. Does he adminiſter to us by men, light when we are in darkneſs? joy when we are in heavineſs? Deliverance when we are in danger? Eaſe and health when we are ſick

ſick or in pain? It cannot be doubted, but he frequently conveys the ſame bleſſings, by the miniſtry of angels: not ſo ſenſibly indeed, but full as effectually, though the meſſengers are not ſeen. Does he frequently deliver us by means of men, from the violence and ſubtilty of our enemies? Many times he works the ſame deliverance by thoſe inviſible agents. Theſe ſhut the mouths of the human lions, ſo that they have no power to hurt us. And frequently they join with our human friends, (although neither they nor we are ſenſible of it) giving them wiſdom, courage, or ſtrength, without which all their labour for us would be unſucceſsful. Thus do they ſecretly miniſter in numberleſs inſtances to the heirs of ſalvation: while we hear only the voices of men, and ſee none but men round about us.

9. But does not the Scripture teach, *The help which is done upon earth, God doth it himſelf?* Moſt certainly he does. And he is able to do it by his own immediate power: he has no need of uſing any inſtruments at all, either in heaven or earth. He wants not either angels or men, to fulfil the whole counſel of his will. But it is not his pleaſure ſo to work. He never did; and we may reaſonably ſuppoſe he never will. He has always wrought by ſuch inſtruments as he pleaſes: but ſtill it is God himſelf that doth the work. Whatever help therefore we have either by angels or men, is as much the work of God, as if he were to put forth his almighty arm, and work without any means at all. But he has uſed them from the beginning of the world: in all ages he has uſed the miniſtry both of men and angels. And hereby eſpecially is ſeen *the manifold*

manifold wisdom of God in the Church. Mean time the same glory redounds to him as if he used no instruments at all.

10. The grand reason why God is pleased to assist men by men, rather than immediately by himself, is undoubtedly to endear us to each other, by these mutual good offices, in order to increase our happiness, both in time and eternity. And is it not for the same reason, that God is pleased to give his angels charge over us? Namely, that he may endear us and them to each other: that by the increase of our love and gratitude to them, we may find a proportionable increase of happiness, when we meet in our Father's kingdom. In the mean time, though we may not worship them, (worship is due only to our common Creator,) yet we may *esteem them very highly in love, for their works' sake.* And we may imitate them in all holiness: suiting our lives to the prayer our Lord himself has taught us: labouring to do his will on earth as angels do it in heaven.

I cannot conclude this discourse better than in that admirable collect of our Church:

"O everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful manner; grant that as thy holy angels alway do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON

SERMON LXXIV.

ON EVIL ANGELS.

EPHESIANS vi. 12

We wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt wicked ſpirits in heavenly places.

1. IT has been frequently obſerved, that there are no gaps or chaſms in the Creation of God, but that all the parts of it are admirably connected together, to make up one univerſal whole. Accordingly there is one chain of beings, from the loweſt to the higheſt point, from an unorganized particle of earth or water, to Michael the Archangel! And the ſcale of creatures does not advance *per ſaltum*, by leaps, but by ſmooth and gentle degrees; although it is true theſe are frequently imperceptible to our imperfect faculties. We cannot accurately trace many

many of the intermediate links of this amazing chain, which are abundantly too fine to be discerned either by our senses or understanding.

2. We can only observe, in a gross and general manner, rising one above another, first inorganical earth, then minerals and vegetables in their several orders; afterwards insects, reptiles, fishes, beasts, men, and angels. Of angels indeed we know nothing with any certainty but by Revelation. The accounts which are left by the wisest of the ancients, or given by the modern Heathens, being no better than silly, self-inconsistent fables, too gross to be imposed even upon children. But by divine Revelation we are informed, that they were all created holy and happy; yet they did not all continue as they were created: some kept, but some left their first estate. The former of these are now good angels, the latter, evil angels. Of the former, I have spoke in a preceding discourse; I purpose now to speak of the latter. And highly necessary it is, that we should well understand what God has revealed concerning them, that they may gain no advantage over us by our ignorance, that we may know how to wrestle against them effectually. For *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.*

3. This single passage seems to contain the whole Scriptural doctrine concerning evil angels. I apprehend the plain meaning of it, literally translated, is this, *Our wrestling*—, the wrestling of real Christians, *is not*—only, or chiefly *against flesh and blood*—weak men or fleshly appetites and passions, *but against principalities, against powers,* —the

—the mighty *princes* of all the infernal legions, with their combined forces: and great is their *power*, as is alſo the power of the legions they command—*againſt the rulers of the world*—(This is the literal meaning of the word.) Perhaps theſe principalities and powers remain chiefly in the citadel of their kingdom. But there are other evil ſpirits that range abroad, to whom the provinces of the world are committed—*Of the darkneſs*—chiefly the ſpiritual darkneſs—*of this age*—which prevails during the preſent ſtate of things—*againſt wicked ſpirits*—eminently ſuch, who mortally hate, and continually oppoſe holineſs, and labour to infuſe unbelief, pride, evil deſire, malice, anger, hatred, envy, or revenge—*in heavenly places*—which were once their abode, and which they ſtill aſpire after.

In proſecuting this important ſubject, I will endeavour to explain,

Firſt, The nature and properties of evil angels: and, Secondly, Their employment.

I. 1. With regard to the firſt, we cannot doubt, but all the angels of God were originally of the ſame *nature*. Unqueſtionably they were the higheſt order of created beings. They were Spirits, pure, ethereal creatures, ſimple and incorruptible; if not wholly immaterial, yet certainly not incumbered with groſs, earthly fleſh and blood. As Spirits they were endued with underſtanding, with affections, and with liberty, or a power of ſelf-determination: ſo that it lay in themſelves, either to continue in their allegiance to God, or to rebel againſt him.

2. And their original *properties* were doubtleſs the ſame with thoſe of the holy angels. There is no abſurdity in ſuppoſing Satan, their chief, otherwiſe ſtiled *Lucifer, Son of the Morning*, to have been at leaſt "one of the firſt, if not the firſt Archangel." Like the other ſons of the morning they had a height and depth of underſtanding quite incomprehenſible to us. In conſequence of this, they had ſuch knowledge and wiſdom, that the wiſeſt of the children of men, (had men then exiſted,) would have been mere ideots in compariſon of them. Their ſtrength was equal to their knowledge, ſuch as it cannot enter into our heart to conceive: neither can we conceive to how wide a ſphere of action, either their ſtrength or their knowledge extended. Their number God alone can tell: doubtleſs it was only leſs than infinite. And a third part of theſe ſtars of heaven the arch-rebel drew after him.

3. We do not exactly know (becauſe it is not revealed in the Oracles of God,) either what was the occaſion of their apoſtacy, or what effect it immediately produced upon them. Some have not improbably ſuppoſed that when God *publiſhed the decree*, (mentioned Pſalm ii. ver. 6, 7,) concerning the kingdom of his only-begotten Son, to be over all creatures: theſe firſt-born of creatures gave place to pride, comparing themſelves to him; (poſſibly intimated by the very name of Satan, *Lucifer* or *Michael*, which means, *Who is like God?*) It may be, ſatan then firſt giving way to temptation, ſaid in his heart, "I too will have my throne. *I will ſit upon the ſides of the North! I will be like the moſt High.*" But how did the mighty then fall! What an amazing loſs did they ſuſtain! If we allow of them

them all, what our Poet ſuppoſes concerning their chief in particular,

> "His form had not yet loſt
> All its original brightneſs, nor appear'd
> Leſs than Archangel ruin'd, and the exceſs
> Of glory obſcur'd."

If we ſuppoſe their outward form was not entirely changed, (though it muſt have been in a great degree: becauſe the evil diſpoſition of the mind, muſt dim the luſtre of the viſage,) yet what an aſtoniſhing change was wrought within, when angels became devils! when the holieſt of all the creatures of God, became the moſt unholy!

4. From the time that they ſhook off their allegiance to God, they ſhook off all goodneſs, and contracted all thoſe tempers which are moſt hateful to him, and moſt oppoſite to his nature. And ever ſince they are full of pride, arrogance, haughtineſs, exalting themſelves above meaſure: and although ſo deeply depraved through their inmoſt frame, yet admiring their own perfections. They are full of envy, if not againſt God himſelf; (and even that is not impoſſible, ſeeing they formerly aſpired after his throne) yet againſt all their fellow-creatures: againſt the angels of God, who now enjoy the heaven from which they fell: and much more againſt thoſe worms of the earth, who are now called to *inherit the kingdom*. They are full of cruelty, of rage againſt all the children of men, whom they long to inſpire with the ſame wickedneſs with themſelves, and to involve in the ſame miſery.

5. In the proſecution of this infernal deſign they are diligent in the higheſt degree. To find out the moſt effectual means of putting it into

execution, they apply to this end the whole force of their angelical underſtanding. And they ſecond it with their whole ſtrength, ſo far as God is pleaſed to permit. But it is well for mankind, that God hath ſet them their bounds which they cannot paſs. He hath ſaid to the fierceſt and ſtrongeſt of the apoſtate ſpirits, "Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no farther." Otherwiſe how eaſily and how quickly might one of them overturn the whole frame of nature! How ſoon would they involve all in one common ruin, or at leaſt, deſtroy man from the face of the earth? And they are indefatigable in their bad work: they never are faint or weary. Indeed it ſeems, no ſpirits are capable of wearineſs but thoſe that inhabit fleſh and blood.

6. One circumſtance more we may learn from the Scripture, concerning the evil angels. They do not wander at large, but are all united under one common head. It is he that is ſtyled by our bleſſed Lord, *the prince of this world:* yea, the Apoſtle does not ſcruple to call him *the god of this world.* He is frequently ſtyled *ſatan*, the adverſary; being the great adverſary both of God and man. He is termed, *the devil;* by way of eminence, *Apollyon*, or the Deſtroyer; *the old ſerpent*, from his beguiling *Eve* under that form; and *the angel of the bottomleſs pit.* We have reaſon to believe that the other evil angels are under his command: that they are ranged by him according to their ſeveral orders, that they are appointed to their ſeveral ſtations, and have from time to time their ſeveral works and offices aſſigned them. And undoubtedly they are connected (though we know not how; certainly not by love) both to him and to each other.

II. But

II. But what is the employment of evil angels? This is the second point to be considered.

1. They are (remember! so far as God permits) κοσμοκράτορες· *Governors of the world!* So that there may be more ground than we are apt to imagine, for that strange expression of satan, (Matt. iv. 8, 9.) when he had *shewed* our Lord *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* It is a little more particularly expressed, in the fourth chapter of St. Luke. *The devil shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* (Such an astonishing measure of power is still left in the prince of darkness!) *And the devil said, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it,* ver. 5, 6. They are *the rulers of the darkness of this age,* (so the words are literally translated) of the present state of things, during which *the whole world lieth in the wicked one.* He is the element of the children of men only those who fear God being excepted. He and his angels, in connexion with, and in subordination to him, dispose all the ignorance, all the error, all the folly, and particularly all the wickedness of men, in such a manner as may most hinder the kingdom of God, and most advance the kingdom of darkness.

2. "But has every man a particular evil angel, as well as a good one attending him? This has been an exceeding ancient opinion both among the Christians and the Jews before them. But it is much doubted, whether it can be sufficiently proved from Scripture. Indeed it would not be

improbable, that there is a particular evil angel with every man, if we were assured there is a good one. But this cannot be inferred from those words of our Lord concerning little children, "In heaven their angels do continually see the face of their Father which is in heaven?" This only proves, that there are angels who are appointed to take care of little children. It does not prove, that a particular angel is allotted to every child. Neither is it proved by the words of Rhoda, who hearing the voice of Peter, said, *It is his angel*. We cannot infer any more from this, even suppose *his angel* means his guardian angel, than that Rhoda believed the doctrine of guardian angels, which was then common among the Jews. But still it will remain a disputable point, (seeing Revelation determines nothing concerning it,) Whether every man is attended, either by a particular good, or a particular evil angel?

3. But whether or no particular men are attended by particular evil spirits, we know that Satan and all his angels, are continually warring against us, and watching over every child of man. They are ever watching to see whose outward or inward circumstances, whose prosperity or adversity, whose health or sickness, whose friends, or enemies, whose youth or age, whose knowledge or ignorance, whose blindness or idleness, whose joy or sorrow, may lay them open to temptation. And they are perpetually ready to make the utmost advantage of every circumstance. These skilful wrestlers espy the smallest slip we make, and avail themselves of it immediately: as they also are *about our bed, and about our path, and spy out all our ways*. Indeed each

each of them *walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;* or whom he may *beguile through his subtilety, as the serpent beguiled Eve.* Yea, and in order to do this the more effectually, they transform themselves into angels of light. Thus

"With rage that never ends,
Their hellish arts they try:
Legions of dire, malicious fiends,
And spirits enthron'd on high."

4. It is by these instruments chiefly that the *foolish hearts of* those that know not God *are darkened:* yea, they frequently darken in a measure the hearts of them that do know God. *The god of this world knows* how to *blind our hearts*, to spread a cloud over our understanding, and to obscure the light of those truths, which at other times shine as bright as the noon-day sun. By this means he assaults our faith, our evidence of things unseen. He endeavours to weaken that hope full of immortality to which God had begotten us, and thereby to lessen, if he cannot destroy, our joy in God our Saviour. But above all he strives to damp our love of God, as he knows this is the spring of all our religion, and that as this rises or falls, the work of God flourishes or decays in the soul.

5. Next to the love of God, there is nothing which satan so cordially abhors as the love of our neighbour. He uses therefore every possible means to prevent or destroy this: to excite either private or public suspicions, animosities, resentment, quarrels: to destroy the peace of families or of nations, and to banish unity and concord from the earth, and this indeed is the triumph of his

his art; to embitter the poor, miſerable children of men againſt each other, and at length urge them to do his own work, to plunge one another into the pit of deſtruction.

6. This enemy of all righteouſneſs is equally diligent, to hinder every good word and work. If he cannot prevail upon us to do evil, he will if poſſible, prevent our doing good. He is peculiarly diligent, to hinder the work of God from ſpreading in the hearts of men. What pains does he take, to prevent or obſtruct the general work of God? And how many are his devices, to ſtop its progreſs in particular ſouls? To hinder their continuing or growing in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? To leſſen, if not deſtroy that *love*, *joy*, *peace*; that *long-ſuffering*, *gentleneſs*, *goodneſs*; that *fidelity*, *meekneſs*, *temperance*, which our Lord works by his loving ſpirit in them that believe, and wherein the very eſſence of religion conſiſts.

7. To effect theſe ends, he is continually labouring with all his ſkill and power, to infuſe evil thoughts of every kind into the hearts of men. And certainly it is eaſy for a ſpirit to ſpeak to our heart, as for a man to ſpeak to our ears. But ſometimes it is exceeding difficult to diſtinguiſh theſe from our own thoughts: thoſe which he injects ſo exactly reſembling thoſe which naturally ariſe in our own minds. Sometimes indeed we may diſtinguiſh one from the other by this circumſtance. The thoughts which naturally ariſe in our minds, are generally, if not always, occaſioned by, or at leaſt connected with, ſome inward or outward circumſtance that went before. But thoſe that are preternaturally ſuggeſted, have frequently no relation to, or connexion

connexion (at leaſt none that we are able to diſcern) with any thing which preceded. On the contrary, they ſhoot in, as it were, acroſs and thereby ſhew, that they are of a different growth.

8. He likewiſe labours to awaken evil paſſions or tempers in our ſouls. He endeavours to inſpire thoſe paſſions and tempers, which are directly oppoſite to *the fruit of the Spirit*. He ſtrives to inſtil unbelief, atheiſm, ill-will, bitterneſs, hatred, malice, envy; oppoſite to faith and love: fear, ſorrow, anxiety, worldly care; oppoſite to peace and joy: impatience, ill-nature, anger, reſentment; oppoſite to long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, meekneſs: fraud, guile, diſſimulation; contrary to fidelity: love of the world, inordinate affection, fooliſh deſires; oppoſite to the love of God. One ſort of evil deſires he may probably raiſe or inflame, by touching the ſprings of this animal machine. Endeavouring thus, by means of the body to diſturb or ſully the ſoul.

9. And in general we may obſerve, that as no good is done, or ſpoken, or thought by any man without the aſſiſtance of God, working together *in* and *with* thoſe that believe in him: ſo there is no evil done, or ſpoke, or thought, without the aſſiſtance of the devil, *who worketh with energy*, with ſtrong, though ſecret power, *in the children of unbelief*. Thus he *entered into* Judas, and confirmed him in the deſign of betraying his maſter. Thus he *put it in the heart* of Ananias and Sapphira *to lie unto the Holy Ghoſt*. And in like manner he has a ſhare in all the actions and words, and deſigns of evil men. As the children of God *are workers together with God*,

God, in every good thought, or word, or action; so the children of the devil are workers together with him, in every evil thought, or word, or work. So that as all good tempers, and remotely all good words and actions are the fruit of the good Spirit; in like manner, all evil tempers, with all the words and works which spring from them, are the fruit of the evil spirit: insomuch that all the *works of the flesh*, of our evil nature, are likewise the *work of the devil*.

10. On this account, because he is continually inciting men to evil, he is emphatically called, *The Tempter*. Nor is it only with regard to his own children, that he is thus employed. He is continually tempting the children of God also, and those that are labouring so to be,

"A constant watch he keeps;
He eyes them night and day;
He never slumbers, never sleeps,
Lest he should lose his prey."

Indeed the holiest of men, as long as they remain upon earth, are not exempt from his temptations. They cannot expect it: seeing *it is enough for the disciple, to be as his Master*. And we know he was tempted to evil till he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*.

11. For such is the malice of the wicked one, that he will torment whom he cannot destroy. If he cannot intice men to sin, he will (so far as he is permitted) put them to pain. There is no doubt but he is the occasion, directly or indirectly, of many of the pains of mankind: which those who can no otherwise account for them, lightly pass over as *Nervous*. And innumerable *Accidents*, as they are called, are undoubtedly owing to

to his agency; such as the unaccountable fright or falling of horses, the overturning of carriages, the breaking or dislocating of bones; the hurt done by the falling or burning of houses, by storms of wind, snow, rain, or hail, by lightning or earthquakes. But to all these, and a thousand more, this subtle spirit can give the appearance of *Accidents:* for fear the sufferers, if they knew the real agent, should call for help on one that is stronger than him.

12. There is little reason to doubt but many diseases likewise, both of the acute and chronical kind, are either occasioned or increased by diabolical agency: particularly those that begin in an instant, without any discernible cause: as well as those that continue, and perhaps gradually increase, in spite of all the power of medicine. Here indeed *vain men* that *would be wise*, again call in the nerves to their assistance. But is not this explaining *ignotum per ignotius?* A thing unknown by what is more unknown? For what do we know of the nerves themselves? Not even whether they are solid or hollow!

13. Many years ago, I was asking an experienced Physician, and one particularly eminent for curing Lunacy, "Sir, have you not seen reason to believe, that some Lunatics are really Demoniacs?" He answered, "Sir, I have been often inclined to think, that most Lunatics are Demoniacs. Nor is there any weight in that objection, that they are frequently cured by medicine. For so might any other disease, occasioned by an evil spirit, if God did not suffer him to repeat the stroke, by which that disease is occasioned."

14. This

14. This thought opens to a wider ſcene. Who can tell how many of thoſe diſeaſes, which we impute altogether to natural cauſes, may be really preternatural? What diſorder is there in the human frame, which an evil angel may not inflict? Cannot he ſmite us, as he did Job, and that in a moment, with boils from the crown of the head to the ſole of the foot? Cannot he with equal eaſe, inflict any other either external or internal malady? Could not he in a moment, by divine permiſſion, caſt the ſtrongeſt man down to the ground, and make him *wallow foaming*, with all the ſymptoms either of an Epilepſy or Apoplexy? In like manner, it is eaſy for him, to ſmite any one man, or every one in a city or nation, with a malignant fever, or with the plague itſelf, ſo that vain would be the help of man.

15. But that malice blinds the eyes of the wiſe, one would imagine ſo intelligent a being, would not ſtoop ſo low as it ſeems the devil ſometimes does, to torment the poor children of men! For to him we may reaſonably impute many little inconveniencies which we ſuffer. "I believe (ſaid that excellent man the Marquis de *Renty*, when the bench on which he ſat ſnapped in ſunder without any viſible cauſe) that ſatan had a hand in it, making me to fall untowardly." I know not whether he may not have a hand, in that unaccountable horror, with which many have been ſeized in the dead of night, even to ſuch a degree that all their bones have ſhook. Perhaps he has a hand alſo in thoſe terrifying dreams which many have, even while they are in perfect health.

It

It may be obſerved, in all theſe inſtances, we uſually ſay *the devil*, as if there was one only; becauſe theſe ſpirits, innumerable as they are, do all act in concert: and becauſe we know not, whether one or more are concerned in this or that work of darkneſs.

It remains only to draw a few plain inferences from the doctrine which has been delivered.

1. And firſt, as a general preſervative againſt all the rage, the power, and ſubtilty of your great adverſary, *put on the panoply*, the whole armour *of God*, univerſal holineſs. See that *the mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*, and that ye *walk as Chriſt alſo walked*; that ye have a conſcience void of offence toward God and toward men. So ſhall ye *be able to withſtand* all the force and all the ſtratagems of the enemy. So ſhall ye be able to *withſtand in the evil day*; in the day of ſore temptation. And *having done all to ſtand*; to remain in the poſture of victory and triumph.

2. To his *fiery darts*, his evil ſuggeſtions of every kind, blaſphemous or unclean, though numberleſs as the ſtars of heaven, oppoſe *the ſhield of faith*: a conſciouſneſs of the love of Chriſt Jeſus will effectually quench them all.

"Jeſus hath dy'd for *you!*
What can your faith withſtand?
Believe, hold faſt your ſhield! and who
Shall pluck you from his hand?"

3. If he inject doubts, Whether you are a child of God; or fears, leſt you ſhould not endure to the end, *take to you for a helmet, the hope of ſalvation*. Hold faſt that glad word,

Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. You will never be overthrown, you will never be ſtaggered by your adverſary, if you *hold faſt the beginning of this confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end.*

4. Whenever the *roaring lion, walking about and ſeeking whom he may devour*, aſſaults you with all his malice, and rage, and ſtrength, *reſiſt* him *ſtedfaſt in the faith.* Then is the time, having cried to the ſtrong for ſtrength, to *ſtir up the gift of God that is in you:* to ſummon all your faith and hope, and love, to turn the attack in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might: and *he will* ſoon *flee from you.*

5 But "there is no temptation, ſays one, greater than the being without temptation." When therefore this is the caſe, when ſatan ſeems to be withdrawn, then beware leſt he hurt you more as a crooked ſerpent, than he could do as a roaring lion. Then take care you are not lulled into a pleaſing ſlumber, *leſt he ſhould beguile you as he did Eve*, even in innocence, and inſenſibly draw you *from your ſimplicity toward Chriſt*, from ſeeking all your happineſs in him.

6. Laſtly, if he *transform himſelf into an angel of light*, then are you in the greateſt danger of all. Then have you need to beware, leſt you alſo fall, where many mightier have been ſlain: then have you the greateſt need to

to *watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* And if you continue ſo to do, the God whom you love and ſerve will deliver you. *The anointing of the Holy One ſhall abide with you and teach you of all things.* Your eye will pierce through ſnares: you ſhall know what that *holy, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is*, and ſhall hold on your way, till you *grow up in all things into him that is our head, even Chriſt Jeſus.*

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.